

Posted by Rachel; The Team Graeme Blog begins...

Posted by Rachel, Wednesday, 13 September 2006

Things are so crazy in terms of trying to keep in touch with people, so I thought I would set up a Cancer Research UK blog so that I can only have to give out the website address once to everyone! Cunnig I thought...

Rx

Hospice

Posted by Rachel, Wednesday, 20 September 2006

I wrote this rambling note when I was in the hospice yesterday....

As Graeme's electric bed was arriving sometime today ("between 10 and 4") we couldn't all go to the hospice to see Graeme. Dad waited at home and caught up with some work whilst Mam and I came to the hospice. I brought my laptop so I could do some work here (there's not a whole lot to do except sit by Graeme and wait with baited breath for him to demand food, drink or anything else).

Graeme seems pretty good and the nurses think he's settled in well. He slept well last night (with a little help from his friend the sleeping table). He slept in until 9am, which is excellent, probably more sleep than he's had in a while. Other than resting and asking us to move his bed (for Simpsons' fans, "bed goes up, bed goes down"), he is just eating non-stop! The doctors have increased his steroid dose and are giving him paracetamol and ibuprofen regularly, but as yet he is not being given anything stronger (the mighty ibuprofen versus the tumour....seems a bit David v Goliath to me....they had to give him codine this morning, but he said he didn't have headaches for the rest of the day).

We are not sure how long Graeme will be staying in the hospice; it will be until they are sure the revised medication helps him. Hopefully, that won't be too long and we'll then be able to take him home and take advantage of the various nurses that will come in to help look after him. It's a bit of relief to leave the caring to the professionals.

It's quite sweet, cos he's only been in the hospice a day and a couple of nurses have already said to me "you must be his sister, he's very proud of you being a lawyer etc etc". I think that shows his mental functions are being affected, as not many people readily admit to being related to a lawyer....but whatever else it's affecting, the tumour is not stopping him continue to be a great brother :-)

Comments (1)

1. anon left...

Thursday, 21 September 2006 9:14 am

You are one very cool act girl..... everyone's proud of you, not just your brother!

Breaking Records

Posted by Rachel, Thursday, 21 September 2006

Yesterday we tried to break the record for the number of people around one hospice bed. Graeme has many great friends who have been piling into the hospice, bringing lots of sweets and grapes (G told me to tell people they could only come if they brought grapes or wine gums!) It's quite bizarre how it is like a flashback to Jan '05 when Graeme first went into hospital - we are spending all day away from teh house, coming back late and having a late dinner. We tried to break records then with people round the hospital bed.

It's a continual source of amazement to me how brilliant people can be. These are people who are clearly gutted at having to visit their friend in a hospice, but manage to keep the banter going, make G laugh, make everyone laugh, and so Graeme's spirits are high. When his work colleagues were in yesterday, G said a few things about when he goes back to work... you gotta give the guy credit for the genuine hope he has.

The substantial reason for this entry is that we now know that G is in the hospice until Tuesday. We now have an all-singing and all-dancing bed in the back living room, along with an electric hoist, a hospital table and various other cancer accessories. When he comes home on Tuesday, we'll have the gang back (district nurses, marie curie, macmillan etc) and see how we go at home. As the hospice staff are so good, I suspect G will be back in there after a short time, as it's not fair on him to be given substandard care from his well-meaning but untrained family! More importantly, he seems settled and apart from the comments each day when we arrive "what time do you call this?", he doesn't seem to mind being in a separate place from us.

Speaking of which, we're setting off soon so I best go!

Rx

Comments (1)

1. anon left...

Friday, 22 September 2006 9:49 am

You and your family are an inspiration to us all. Keep your spirits up... xx

Ups and Downs

Posted by Rachel, Monday, 25 September 2006

It's only a short time since the last blog entry but each day seems like about a week at the minute...

Graeme had a fairly ok day on Friday, but then a really bad day on Saturday, when the nurses used the hoist to get Graeme out of bed and into the shower, but this caused Graeme to feel sick (the tumour has always affected his balance to varying degress) and subsequently was vomiting for over an hour. He looked incredibly ill for the rest of the day and barely said a thing, to the point where I was unsure he'd make it through the weekend. He has been taking regular paracetamol and ibuprofen which seemed to be controlling the headaches with the help of a little bit of codeine every now and then, but over the weekend and today the headaches appear to have gotten worse. But then, yesterday and most of today, he was in pretty good spirits, laughing

along with some friends, and although he was tired and has headaches every now and then, it's a nice reminder it's still him in there. And it never ceases to amaze me how much better it feels to be laughing and how much laughter there is to be found in all sorts of hopeless situations. This is pretty much the most depressing and sad experience I've had to date (and hopefully ever will have), and although sometimes I am so aware that I'm in a hospice, in the room of my bedridden, almost-blind 28 year old brother who used to be so active and full of life that it can tear me apart to watch him unable to sit up or feed himself, laughter is pretty much the one thing that can relieve the tension, stress and worry. In fact, there are so many crazy people around us at the minute, that I might start writing the funniest story I've heard each day at the bottom of each entry! There might be something lost in the translation so let me know if they don't seem that funny!

But I digress. He is still on course to come home tomorrow and be looked after by us, along with the district nurses in twice a day and the Marie Curie nurses in 3 nights a week. One problem is going to be ensuring G is medicated enough to keep the pain at bay, and another is getting him comfortable, as he is such a big guy (6 foot 2 and about 17 stone) that it is hard to manoeuvre him. He seems to want to come home (although it is hard to tell with Graeme, because he pretty much agrees with anything) so we'll give it our best shot, although neither my parents nor I think he will be at home very long before going back in the hospice. We will see... Hopefully if he does go back in a hospice, it will be closer to home - the one he has been in for a week is about 30 minutes' drive away, whereas there is one that is about a mile from home, which was full when they tried to get him in last week.

Friends continue to be amazing - we have one neighbour doing our ironing and various people have started providing meals for us to heat up! At first it is a bit weird but then our neighbour said she felt as if she was helping us by doing something practical rather than just asking how we are all the time. I went out with some friends at the weekend, which was great, because I've been going a bit stir crazy in the same room (mostly in silence) for up to 11 hours each day.....

I will leave it there and ramble on a bit more tomorrow perhaps, as I'm so tired I keep getting halfway through a sentence and forgetting what I'm saying!

Rx

Funniest Story Today - A friend of Graeme's from work told us that someone who used to work in the office once went through a car wash and, just as it started, noticed the windscreen wiper was stuck, so got out of the car to release it. She then got swept up by the car wash on to the bonnet and then on to the roof, which caused the whole machine to jam! The owners of the car wash then demanded that she pay them for the cost of repairing the machine and when she refused, threatened to sue her! I was laughing too much to remember what happened, I must find out...

Comments (4)

1. anon left...

Tuesday, 26 September 2006 12:32 am

Corinthians 4:16-18.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

2. Em left...

Tuesday, 26 September 2006 8:53 am

You and your family are amazing - the strength you have shown is unbelievable and your ability to keep your heads up and the laughter flowing is truly inspiring. If you have the Weasleys beside you then you guys must be the Potters - gathering awe, respect and love wherever you go.xxx

3. Caroline left...

Tuesday, 26 September 2006 3:17 pm

Hi Hon

Just to let you know I am thinking of you all. I can think of various fun activities with a hoist and a bottle of vodka! Caro xx

4. anon left...

Wednesday, 27 September 2006 12:39 pm

Keep up the funny stories - I laughed so much I nearly wet my knickers. xx

Home Sweet Home...

Posted by Rachel, Thursday, 28 September 2006

Graeme was successfully transferred to the Turner Hospice on Tuesday, and seemed in quite bright spirits for the rest of the day. We then had a baptism of fire yesterday when he had diarrhoea and my Mam and I had to change the sheets 3 times in about 5 hours. District nurses are bed-bathing him in a morning, and settling him in each evening, and tonight we have a Marie Curie nurse staying for the first time. This evening's "angel" is called Tracey and is really lovely, she's here til 7am, so hopefully my parents and I can have undisturbed sleep and better equip us to deal with everything. More Marie Curie nurses are coming in on Saturday and Sunday night as well (the list of charities I want to support is just growing by the day...).

So far so good, G seems quite happy at home. He said today that he couldn't tell the difference between the light being on and off so I suspect his sight is even worse than he lets on. his lack of sight led to a bit of confusion today, when at about 3pm my Mam said she was going to hang the washing out to dry and G started laughing. When we asked what was funny, I thought he was going to say something like "you're not usually that domesticated" but he said "well, it's about 4 o'clock in the morning isn't it?" so that was a bit bizarre, but I think if he can't determine whether it's light or not, his confusion is going to be more apparent.

G hasn't wanted any visitors for the last couple of days so I'm afraid I have no funny stories to share...actually, I do have one very very funny story (which linked in nicely with yesterday's sheet-changing theme) but even if I kept it anonymous, the person concerned would probably kill me if I shared it with anyone, so am afraid that one will have to remain untold.... a slightly less funny story is that I managed to spill three quarters of a mug of hot tea over my lap yesterday. I screeched with pain in my just-ever-so-slightly melodramatic way while my parents and Grandma mildly sat there and ignored me. It was quite painful to walk for a few hours but I admit I was being a bit dramatic (maybe I went too far when I told Graeme he had to get out of his sick bed as my need was greater than his, although Graeme did say "certainly, whatever you need"!!). The only real casualty was that I thought I had broken my phone and thus lost about 200 photos stored on it as the tea managed to get inside my sim card, battery etc. Seems ok now, though!

Well, I'm going to finish there and get some sleep!

Rx

If...

Posted by Rachel, Saturday, 30 September 2006

(Apologies, today's blog is a bit random!)

I had an interesting chat with the Marie Curie nurse on Wednesday, who spoke of, amongst other things, Graeme's positive mental attitude and how he is not giving up but is fighting for his life with every fibre of his being. She said that there will probably be a steep deterioration as soon as he decides to stop fighting anymore. A number of other people have said similar things, but the way the nurse spoke made me think of part of the poem "If" - don't worry, I'm not going to quote the whole thing, only the bit that made me think of Graeme:

If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on".

I'm not even sure it means what it reminds me of with Graeme but I like the poem anyway so I just thought I'd share that slightly random thought!

There is no real change in the situation: Graeme is still at home and seems ok. He is pretty quiet (as he's been for a number of weeks) and sleeping a lot, but still has moments of pure Graeme, such as yesterday when he asked me if he could have a remote control to turn me down as I don't obey the rules of the "Quiet Room"... The only physical change I've noticed in the last couple of days is that his lack of control over the left side of his mouth/face has become more prominent, to the extent that when he smiles, it only affects the right side of his face and he is talking out of one side of his mouth.

We have another MC nurse staying tonight, and overall we're plodding along ok!

Rx

Trivia for the day- I'm reading a book about Catherine de Medici which contains a description of judicial combat to settle a quarrel between King Henri and a guy called Jarnac. A strong wrestler and athlete called La Chataigneraie fought on behalf of the King and was the clear favourite against the slightly built Jarnac. However, Jarnac managed to strike LC behind the knee by leading with his shield and using a small dagger, and severed LC's tendons, thus winning the fight. Such was the public humiliation for LC that he "had his wound bound and was told he would survive, but he did not care to do so having lost his honour and, tearing off the bandages, proceeded to bleed to death in a huff". I think that's quite a funny description: dying in a huff - I'm sure that showed them!

Team Colours

Posted by Rachel, Saturday, 30 September 2006

In case you're wondering, the reason I've changed the look of the blog is to dress it in the official Team Graeme colours - it's not that we're being sponsored by Orange or easyjet! When my

friends and I were thinking of a colour for the wristbands, we thought orange was a good colour because none of the famous bands used orange (makepoverty history, livestrong, etc) and it was Graeme's five-a-side football team colours. Although the bands turned out to be more brick-coloured than anything, bright orange is still the official colour!

Rx

It's Not All About Us...

Posted by Rachel, Wednesday, 4 October 2006

Update

I haven't written an update for a few days because things are quite stable so there's not much of an update to write - Graeme is usually either sleeping, trying to sleep or eating! In any other circumstance it would sound like heaven to me! He had a very tiny fit on Sunday night when my Mam was introducing him to the Marie Curie nurse. It only lasted 10 seconds and they would not have noticed if they hadn't been looking directly at him at the time of the fit. We have been told to look out for anymore but the nurses and doctors don't seem too worried by it. The good news is that his headaches are under control and he seems quite peaceful and restful. Things are about as good as they can be

Random Thoughts

In the midst of everything happening to Graeme, it's easy to think that there is nothing else going on in the world. It is so all-consuming I often don't leave the house for days on end. In the last few days, though, I've heard about a few very sad events that have happened to those we know and I also saw some pretty amazing people when watching part of the Great North Run. It's a sad reminder that a lot of people all over the world are going through unbearable suffering. I saw a report of a couple of cousins doing the GNR to raise money for their hometown of Kosovo, where they were taken out in to their garden along with 19 other members of their families and were shot as part of the "ethnic cleansing". Only those two girls and 3 other cousins survived - they witnessed the execution of their parents, grandparents, aunties and uncles, siblings etc. I can't even begin to imagine how they've got through the last few years. Just to be living any form of normal life after recovering from that emotional and physical trauma (they were shot several times themselves) is amazing, but to be doing runs and raising money to create a "Peace Park" in Kosovo is just mind-blowingly incredible and inspirational.

TG Plans

My friends and I are debating whether or not to do a big TEAM GRAEME fundraising event next year - firstly I seem to have been emotionally blackmailed into doing the Great North Run but more epic is the idea of climbing Mount Kilimanjaro. This latter idea has a good TG link, because Graeme climbed Mt K for Scope a couple of years ago and, unbeknownst to everyone, he had a brain tumour at the time (this was about 6 months before G was diagnosed and the doctors said the tumour had probably been there about 6-9 months). G didn't quite get to the top so we thought it would be a great idea to climb Mt K in his name and raise money for either CRUK, Marie Curie or Macmillan. This is all in the stages of pre-planning rather than actual planning but I do feel like I want to do something positive out of all this rubbish.

This entry seems a bit serious, so apologies! We haven't really seen anyone recently to tell us funny stories - the stories we have heard have all been a bit gloom and doom. I could do with a laugh so if anyone has any funny stories, please drop me a line; if I deem it worthy of my esteemed blog I may include it next time

Rx

PS If you don't hear from me for a while, please contact the police, I believe a certain Ms P may be about to kill me...

Comments (1)

1. anon left...

Monday, 9 October 2006 5:46 am

You are an amazing woman Rachel. You hold your head high with dignity and courage. You are continually thankful for all the people God has placed around you to help. Your outlook is further than the here and now, and you're already thinking of ways you can use this experience to help others. Your heart is full of compassion and love for all those in the world who are also suffering. I pray that God in his great grace would continue to work in and through you, to strengthen your spirit and may grow your gifts of compassion, love and dedication. Graeme has the most wonderful sister, and you have the most wonderful brother. We are so proud of you both.

"For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the word that was preached to you."

Proper Update - London, Morphine and Israelis

Posted by Rachel, Monday, 9 October 2006

This is about the fourth draft of an update for the orange frog - new name for the blog, courtesy of happy harry . Since the last one, quite a lot has happened and by the time I've finished one draft, things change and it's out of date before I upload it to the frog - I've been down to London for a couple of days, Graeme has deteriorated a bit and he has had a visit from a friend of his from Israel. This could therefore turn into an epic frog...so beware!

London/Update

The Rents said to me about a week ago that if I wanted to go down to London for a couple of days I should do so because Graeme was fairly stable. After a bit of umming and aahing, I decided that I would go down on Thursday to give me a chance to catch up with people, do some work that was easier to do from the office and take a breather from the intensity of life chez Turner.

On Wednesday night, Graeme started throwing up at about 2am, and he continued to feel a bit rough the next morning. Despite my reservations, my parents insisted that he would be okay and there was no reason why I should still go. I'd then been on the train for about half an hour when my Mam texted me to say that the nurses had visited as normal and given G's headaches, sickness and temperature, they had decided it was time to move up the painkilling ladder to oramorph, which is not as strong as the morphine they give you in hospital but a lot stronger than ibuprofen, paracetamol and codeine. I felt a bit guilty being on the way down to London when G had clearly

gone a bit downhill...I could probably write about 10,000 words about the times I've felt guilty over the last 21 months, but you'll be pleased to know I'm not going to!

Whilst I was in London, I have to say that I was quite nervous and was texting/phoning home to ensure nothing had changed, but I stayed down South until Saturday afternoon and had a nice relaxing time. Not many people can claim to have gone to work for a day and half to recharge their batteries, but I can do so! I also managed to do a bit of retail therapy and bought myself a psp, which is perfect for train journeys to and fro the frozen north...I nearly missed my stop on Saturday because I lost track of time when I was listening to some music and trying to save the lemmings!

When I got back on Saturday, it was quite scary how much had changed in just a couple of days. Graeme has continued to take Oramorph as and when his headaches come back (on top of the regular painkillers) and it seems to be doing the trick. It does completely knock him out, though, which makes it hard for us to feed him and give him his other tablets when he is pretty much unconscious. Yesterday he didn't need any Oramorph, but he is incredibly quiet and no longer responding to things you say other than a few words a day. Whereas last week he would respond to questions or comments even with just a sentence here and there, it's now difficult to tell if he's awake. We don't know whether he is just too tired to speak or whether he doesn't want to speak. The medical summary is therefore not very good...on reflection, I shouldn't have complained when there wasn't much to write in an update other than "sleeping".

Good friends

When Graeme went to the Arctic 5 years ago (he spent 6 months there teaching Inuit kids), he lived with another guy from the scheme called Oded, who is from Israel. Oded was meant to come over for a few days a couple of months ago, but had to cancel when he got called up for national service (apparently they are always on standby). My Dad and I emailed him last week to update him on Graeme as we saw several messages from him when we checked G's emails. So Oded immediately arranged to come over - he flew over on Thursday and went back on Saturday. I expect Oded will have got a bit of a shock seeing Graeme as he hasn't seen him since he's been ill. The Rents tell me that Oded was an amazing guy and was just fantastic with Graeme. They told Oded that they wanted him to have something of Graeme's from his room, anything at all - he chose the current Newcastle United away shirt as he said Newcastle United always makes him think of Graeme. When he said goodbye, my Mam said she had to leave the room, as Graeme said something about a return reunion in Israel, to which Oded said "I'm waiting for you, my friend". It's all very sad, obviously, when people are visiting to effectively say g'bye to G, but it's uplifting to my parents and I that there are so many people who care. Oded brought a newspaper from Canada (the Inuvik Drum!) which contained a photo of Graeme, Oded and the girls' soccer team they coached to victory in a province-wide tournament. I would imagine not many other people from Stockton have appeared in the Inuvik Drum!

Shameless Begging/Fundraising

Just a quick note to say well done to the 5 people from (my) work who did the Nike runlondon event last night for Team Graeme (supporting Macmillan). Macmillan nurses have been responsible for getting Graeme's all-singing, all-dancing bed, wheelchair, walking stick, commode, handrails at the front and back doors, paving stones for the drive, hoist, etc...all of which obviously costs money and all of which has made the last few months a lot easier for Graeme as well as the rest of us. If you want to sponsor the 5 gluttons for punishment, all the money will go to Macmillan: www.justgiving.com/teamgraeme - they had raised about £600 the last time I looked, which is fantastic!

I think that's about it for now - I have been reprimanded for not writing enough on the frog, so I am going to try and do more entries (little and often and all that jazz!)

Take care one and all,

Rx

Mad Laughter

Posted by Rachel, Monday, 9 October 2006

We are quite annoyed about a stupid DVD club, so I thought I would share, but to counteract the rant, I wanted to share two things that make me laugh.

One thing that has made me mad

I have been sorting out some of Graeme's subscriptions that are no longer relevant, such as cancelling his DVD rental clubs etc. Most of them have been very efficient, and I haven't needed to go into the details of tumours etc. My Dad rang up one DVD and music club, though, who despite my Dad giving detailed descriptions of Graeme's health, insisted that they couldn't cancel it without a doctor's note. The first person he spoke to obviously didn't listen to what my Dad said because he told me Dad "Well, when Graeme is feeling better...". My Dad, who is not known for being level-headed at the best of times understandably went absolutely ballistic and spoke to various people at the club who still insisted they couldn't do anything without a doctor's note. My Dad then couldn't sleep on Saturday night so got up at 4.30am and wrote a strong letter to them. FYI, the club is musicandfilm.co.uk and G had fulfilled the minimum orders.

Two things that have made me laugh

Firstly, writing about the equipment and support Macmillan nurses have provided makes me think of probably our funniest "tumour humour" moment, when my Mam was pushing Graeme around the gardens of Chatsworth and ended up losing control of the wheelchair when pushing him down a slope - she had to run behind the wheelchair and hold on for dear life as the chair raced down the slope, much to the hysterical laughter of my Dad and I - I did get my Dad to run after them and stop them falling, but I couldn't stop laughing about it for weeks!

Secondly, there is a little snippet of information in the Inuvik Drum about a "Fishin' competition". It says, I quote:

"Nine people are entered in the Tuktoyaktuk fish derby, which has \$600 set aside for winners. The fisher that brings in the heaviest catch will win \$150, as will the person toting the lightest fish caught. The darkest man, woman, boy and girl will also be rewarded with \$75 each in the darkest tan category. "People are getting black," said assistant recreation programmer for the hamlet Lloyd Gruben. "With the snow melting the reflection off anything goes right onto your face." The derby started May 1 and ends June 8."

There are clearly no fears of political correctness in that part of the North West Territories!

Comments (1)

1. The Rottweiller left...

Friday, 13 October 2006 9:21 am

Buggar me!!! Bet you'd never thought you'd get a relevant reply to your article on Tuktoyaktuk, but there you go. My 1st late husband, (though not late at the time, dec '77) was an electronics engineer, installing and servicing fax machines in an area of Canada covering British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Yukon Territories and Northwest Territories and was once summonsed to said Tuktoyaktuk to repair a machine, the technology for which was in its very infancy, and travelled by scheduled air lines, light aircraft to well within the arctic circle and finally skidoo to the actual building in which the huge machine was housed, only to find it hadn't been plugged in!!!!!! Not alot of fun for him but kept him out of my way for a day!!!!

It's All About G...And A Bit Melancholic (Just To Warn You)

Posted by Rachel, Tuesday, 10 October 2006

Firstly, I promised a friend that I'd clarify that "the Rents" means my parents; they are not, in fact, hired nurses or rent-a-friends - apologies for any confusion!

On a serious note, some people have said that I'm being strong. I have been through pretty much every emotion in the last year or so; thoughts have swirled around my head so much that I have felt like either my head is going to explode or I am going to go insane (and I've probably come close to both). The only way I know how to deal with it is to turn the emotions into jokes, to fill my mind with work, history, facts, anything; to play computer games; to watch dvds; to get angry at my parents for not dealing with things the way I want them to deal with things when they are probably going through the worst thing you can face as a parent. So I'm anything but strong, I'm just flailing about doing anything to distract myself, because my brain simply cannot process everything. I can almost picture my brain putting its hands over its ears and humming so it can't hear the emotions anymore!

Similarly, I'm conscious of how blunt updates can seem, especially when written down. So in trying to prevent the blog from being too clinical and matter-of-fact, I've used the same strategy and rambled on about various things, tried to make jokes, and generally tried to convey what is happening to Graeme without having you reach for a stiff drink. Whilst the reality is that things are not good, the only words that properly describe it sound as if I'm trying to shock you or, worse, that I'm a bit emotionally disturbed if I can talk about my dying brother in such stark terms. For example, it was a bit startling when I read a week or two ago in Graeme's medical notes: "Graeme is definitely in the end stages of his life and has come back from the hospice to die at home". And my Mam has been in tears most of the day because she was speaking to a Macmillan nurse this morning who said we are in the "last precious days". I think I've not put those sort of things in the blog until now because I don't want the last reports on Graeme's life to be full of gloom and doom (as weird as that sounds, given the circumstances), because that seems disrespectful to him. He has always been such a positive person full of life that it wouldn't be a real reflection of him if it was too depressing.

So, if I may, I'm going to change the nature of the blogs slightly. I'm going to continue to write "medical" updates, but I'm going to try and lighten the mood not by regaling you with random stories (as funny as they might be), but by talking about the man himself. There is a whole load of material, and hopefully that will give you the updates that the blog was meant to provide but will ensure it is a true reflection of Graeme, my brother, and not just be about the person the cancer has made him.

Rx

Comments (2)

1. Anon left...

Tuesday, 10 October 2006 5:05 pm

As ever, you are an inspiration to everyone and the respect and love that I feel for you all is endless. Keep your tumour humour.xxxx

2. Weasleys left...

Tuesday, 10 October 2006 5:30 pm

The fact you cannot see the strength you possess makes you even more amazing. To find the strength the even wake up in the morning is inspirational, but that barely touches the surface of you. My heart, hugs and love are always there for you all - only a car drive away.xxxx

The Force

Posted by Rachel, Tuesday, 10 October 2006

Anyone who has ever met Graeme knows that he is a big fan of Star Wars, so I thought the first frog of the new regime should have a star wars theme... I think of the medical update as the bad stuff (the dark side) and the other stories about him as the good stuff (the light side). I'm sure if I'd paid more attention to Graeme over the years, I might be able to stretch the analogy a bit further, but I'm afraid my knowledge of star wars is limited (and what I do know comes from the Lego Star Wars Playstation game!!)

The Dark Side

So the dark side of the force is that Graeme is asleep pretty much 99% of the day and has lost his appetite a fair bit. He is not very responsive to things you say, but then as the nurses have told us that he will be able to hear pretty much right up to the end we are continuing to try and talk to him to hopefully give him comfort. I can happily talk quite a lot pretty much most of the time (it may surprise you!) but I have to say I find it quite difficult having a conversation on my own! Ironically, because he is barely saying anything, he appears less confused, although he did wake us up at about half 7 yesterday morning and told my Dad to remember to take out the chicken (!). It's difficult to tell whether that is tumour-driven confusion, sleepy confusion or a combination of the two.

When Graeme first went into hospital, a lot of people sent get well soon cards, which we tied to ribbons and hung from the ceiling in our front living room. I think there were about a hundred cards in total and they've been hanging there ever since. Tonight I went downstairs to find my Dad on step ladders removing them all as my Mam asked him to take them down. It was a bit strange to me as I find great comfort in looking around the room and seeing physical evidence of all the people who care about him. But I think it's another way in which we are preparing ourselves for what is happening.

The Light Side

Lesson #1 - G's not known for his communication skills.

It might lose something in the translation but one of the stories that our friends always laugh about arises from a wedding we went to a few years ago. The wedding reception was at a hotel a

fair few miles away from home, and I knew that Graeme had booked a room for him to stay over because he packed a bag and had it in his car when we drove to the wedding. I happily went to the wedding then the reception, quite clearly without anything other than a small handbag. My parents came to the evening reception and, when they came to leave, asked me if I wanted to get a lift with them or if I would get a taxi later on. Graeme then said why would I need to go home when he had booked a twin room for the two of us and insisted that he had told me before the wedding. I was equally insistent that he had not told me. The bride later said he had told her that he had booked a twin room for the pair of us, to which G said "I knew I told a female...". Anyway, so I stayed over in the twin room with Graeme, sleeping in one of Graeme's T-shirts because I had no change of clothes. The next morning I had to go down to breakfast in the clothes I had worn to the wedding (I.e. a dress and 5 inch heels) looking every bit the local tart. Everyone who had stayed over laughed at the impression it gave, and the waitresses looked a bit bemused, to which someone said "it's ok, it's her brother", immediately transforming me from the local tart to the local incestuous tart...which caused even more hysterics as the waitress looked a bit horrified... (understandably!) So it's now a bit of Stockton folklore that he didn't tell me the plans he'd made and thus besmirched my reputation in the process!

Lesson #2 - Graeme is very thoughtful

As G can no longer see, we've been opening his mail to ensure any bills etc are paid on time. His bank statement arrived the other day and we discovered that, in addition to giving money regularly to just about every charity you can name, he has been saving money each month in an account called "Pippa's College Fund", Pippa being his God-daughter who is coming up to her first birthday.

Lesson #3 - Graeme is a heartbreakingly caring brother

One of the few things that Graeme has said about his cancer came a few months ago when he said to my Mam "I'm really glad this is happening to me and not Rachel". I couldn't think of an adequate response then and I still can't so I'll leave it there for now...

Rx

Comments (2)

1. Anon left...

Wednesday, 11 October 2006 8:54 am

Graeme has touched so many people in so many ways that it is a total honour to know him and his family.

2. JULIE EMERSON left...

Thursday, 12 October 2006 4:58 pm

Hello incestuous tart, (should we be watching out for you on a forthcoming Jerry Springer show?) So, so sorry about Graeme, I know you must hear that all the time but I really do know what you are going through. I drove David insane cos after he had the tracery put in he couldn't speak at all but cos I couldn't handle the silence I would waffle on endlessly, conversations being 1 sided. He could, however, gesticulate with the best of 'em. So when I'd run out of things to say I would ask if he wanted me to do anything and the response was always the same, he would give me the "v" sign and nod!!! Cheeky bugger. We didn't live together till he was taken ill but I managed to pack 18 years of verbal drive into 3 months! Graeme really is a lovely lad, the kind any mother would happily let her daughter date! He's gentle, kind, funny and very thoughtful and I am really happy that I had a chance to meet and work with him. He did me a great favour last year when I had

been trying to find a particular dvd of an old TV programme, "The singing ringing tree" Graeme got it off the internet for me. It was a christmas gift for David and he was really chuffed to get it, so I am really grateful to Graeme, and now whenever I watch it I'll think of both of them (and sob my socks off) Keep smiling, theres not a lot more anyone can say but we are all thinking of you much love The new deal Rottweiller, not as exciting as an incestuous tart of course, but I rather fancy I'm a bit too old and fat for that xxxx

Toon Army!

Posted by Rachel, Thursday, 12 October 2006

The chameleon-like orange frog has moved on from The Force and is now working under the auspices of the Toon Army (Newcastle United for the uneducated). I hope this is not news to you that NUFC play in black and white stripes, which happily continues my dark side/light side analogy. So in the white corner we have Team Philippe Albert (G's all-time favourite player) and in the black corner we have Team Boumsong (pretty much everyone's pick for worst player in recent times!). I confess that I asked one of G's closest friends for some inspiration so most of Team Philippe comes from him today. Also, if you haven't already, check out a lovely comment from one of G's work colleagues at the end of the last entry "The Force", it contains a description of how lovely G is, which is not tainted by family-bias :-). Thanks, Julie!

Team Boumsong

The good news is that G hasn't had to have any Oramorph for a few days and doesn't seem to be in any pain.

The bad news is that Graeme had a tricky day yesterday - the nurses had to rectify a problem with his catheter and he was burning up a little bit (his face and chest were very red). We were offered a bit of respite care, but Mam didn't think we needed it then as he is generally peaceful and comfortable. She admitted later that she worries that he would slip away in the hospice without us being there, so I think that's the main reason she turned it down.

The family GP came to visit yesterday, which is the second time in as many weeks. He mainly just chats to my Mam about things as he said he just wants to offer any support he can as he feels helpless. In addition to being unresponsive a lot of the time, I had noticed over the weekend that G was very still, whereas last week he was quite restless at times, which made me think he could be unconscious at times without us knowing. So my Mam spoke to the Dr about it, and he said that G is probably semi-comatose a fair bit of the time. It's quite weird at times because Graeme doesn't look as if he is breathing and then he'll take a big breath; every time I go in to the room I wait to see him breathing before doing or saying anything.

G seemed to brighten up a little bit last night (in that he responded to questions a bit more), but a Macmillan nurse told us that when brain tumoured people get dehydrated it can relieve the pressure on the brain and so they can have a brighter day. So now every time he responds to anything it should be a nice little moment but we wonder if it's because he's dehydrated - you can't win!

Team Philippe

Lesson #4 - Graeme has been known to overindulge

(this could be a recurring lesson)

Strange as it may seem, G has on occasion attained an advanced state of cognitive disfunction... One Sunday morning G awoke after a session in the mall (Stockton's "finest"), and reviewed the happenings of the previous evening. On reflection he had no memory after around midnight, and could not account for the scratches on his hands or the grazes on his knees. He checked his clothes and found his wallet, but was at a loss to explain how he had become covered in mud with grass stains on his shirt and a couple of buttons missing. He thought he may have fallen over on the way home but was so worried he spent half of the next week checking the local news to make sure he hadn't mugged anyone.

Lesson #5 - Graeme has pyromaniac tendencies

When in science class, G started to build a little bonfire out of the spills used to light bunsen burners. So engrossed had he become in his task, he didn't notice that the whole class including the teacher and lab assistant were watching intently. Having finished this masterpiece he set it on fire, at which point old Parling asked what the hell he thought he was doing. Attempting to hide the evidence by sweeping the whole lot into the sink, G replied "sir one caught fire then they all did".

Detention followed.

[As an aside, this trait has clearly been inherited from my Dad who, as a child, used to ride around with a mini-bonfire burning in the basket on the front of his bike!]

Lesson #6 - Graeme can be ruthless

G had been going out with a girl (let's call her Psycho) for about a year when they went on holiday to Greece. Psycho clearly couldn't afford it so Graeme ended up lending her about \$500 (seem to be on a US keyboard and can't find a GBP sign so read pounds when you see \$). Psycho promised to pay \$100 a month, but after a couple of months without any sign of money, G got increasingly mad about it. At the same time, Psycho was being, well, a psycho in many ways and G wanted to end the relationship. However, he was worried that he might never get his money back if he finished with her, so endeavoured to keep going for a bit. He then decided to finish with her about 2 weeks before Christmas because he had really had enough (and explained to me he then wouldn't have to buy her a Christmas present!) but Psycho cried so much he didn't manage to break up with her. Just a few weeks later, they were walking along and Psycho mentioned that she had had to lend \$20 to a friend who had no money. At this point, G went ballistic and told her that she didn't have any right to be lending anyone any money when she still owed him \$500 - any money she could afford to lend to someone should be given to him. So he dumped her there and then - about 11.30pm on New Years' Eve!

Psycho continued to refuse to pay him any money despite continuing requests. My Dad and I told Graeme he should sue for the money, which he eventually decided to do (about 18 months after they broke up). So little ole me filled out his claim form, Psycho didn't even submit a defence so had default judgment made against her and G then applied for and was granted an attachment of earnings order! A nice litigious end to a beautiful relationship!

Rx

PS - Is the coloured text too hard to read?

Comments (1)

1. Chris (workmate) left...

Monday, 16 October 2006 11:40 am

Hi R, Wanted to leave a note on this date as it's my birthday (45 of them in all) and as it's my party, I will cry if I want to, cry if I want to, you would cry too if it happened to you!.....hope you were all singing along to that? On a serious note though I do think of G a lot and have done for sometime since all this kicked off. I remember the day Gavin and I took him home after G felt unwell and unsteady on his feet at work....it was far too early for drink even for G. Being a big know it all I said to him that "I was like this some years ago" following a severe bout of vertigo and basically told G not to worry etc etc. I had just 3 days off during that time and could not stop being sick and feeling dizzy etc. To my horror, and I am still shocked today to discover later that it was the start of something much worse. Much has gone on since then. One thing about G though, he has kept his wickedly dry sense of humour to the end. This was borne out by his beautifully timed response to my own recent washing machine predicament(which I kept G informed about during my visits) and also told him that in comparison (to my broken washer) that he had it easy lying in bed being fed like a King whilst I was concerned about running out of Y fronts! Anyway a few days later, upon telling him that the machine was to be repaired and there would be a plethora of pants in my household again, he drew a deep breath and said "Well that's a weight of my mind then". To think he was worried too about my personal hygiene just as much as me!!!! A note for those who know me..... I will always wear the boobs in G's honour and as often as I can at parties ,events ,nights out even in the privacy of my own home!!! Final note: G is extremely protective of his sis and in past conversations about how you were doing in London, he was fiercely keen for you not to mix with lascivious (ask Fiona) people like me.....too late eh! Great site R and orange is fine by me. Bye for now Chris (x for G....about which I will blog about more later)

Cowboys and Indians

Posted by Rachel, Friday, 13 October 2006

Billy The Kid

Today Graeme has been sleeping even more so than usual because he had a bit of back pain this morning for which he was given half of a dose of Oramorph. The Oramorph knocked him out such that we couldn't even rouse him to feed him at lunchtime. He seemed to brighten a bit late on this evening when he was awake and ate a bit of tea (that's dinner to you southerners!) but his appetite has definitely decreased quite a lot this week. He complained of headaches a bit this evening but happily that seems to be under control now.

I have been trying to get out for a walk in the evenings with my Dad, just to get some fresh air and a bit of exercise. I was speaking to my Mam's brother today who said that everyone focuses on G and my Mam and often forget about my Dad just because he keeps his emotions inside. So it's been quite nice to get a chance to chat to my Dad about things on our little walks.

I keep thinking of part of a poem by Mary Oliver ("In Blackwater Woods") so am going to include it because, well, I'm in charge of the frog so I decide what's in!

Every year
everything
I have ever learned
in my lifetime
leads back to this: the fires
and the black river of loss
whose other side
is salvation,
whose meaning
none of us will ever know.
To live in this world
you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it
against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it go.

Big Chief Running Wheel

Lesson #7 - Graeme can be experimental with his hair

When G spent 6 months in the Arctic, there wasn't a whole lot to do by way of entertainment compared to being back at home, and he developed a love affair with hair dye; he tried various shades, including pink, and finally settled on what can only be described as hideous - a strange, incredibly bright orange-yellow. When my parents went to pick him up from the airport on his return, they barely recognised him as they had not seen pictures of his new hair colour (although G had the nerve to say to my Mam, who looked exactly the same except she'd lost a couple of stone, "You've changed a lot, I didn't recognise you...")

I could be wrong but I believe Graeme hadn't seen much of his natural hair colour since then until he had his hair (half bleached at the time) shaved when he had surgery last year (I'm not being hypocritical and saying that's a bad thing, it's just a casual observation!)

Although G's orange-yellow creation left us begging him to dye it a different colour, it wasn't the worst hair style we'd seen him with. That award goes to a special "Thug" look he developed in his first term at university. By way of background, Graeme took to university life like a duck to water and quickly established himself in the drinking culture of Newcastle. Also, blending in with all the wandering zebras, he was usually to be found wearing a Toon Army shirt. Numerous nights out, including a few with the cocktail society, usually ending with kebabs etc, had left him weighing about 18 stone. After one night out towards the end of that first term, Graeme and his friend decided to dye their hair. However, once they'd done so, they decided they didn't like it so shaved all their hair off. Picture a 6 foot 2, 18-stone giant with shaved hair wearing a football shirt...nice huh? His friends said they would cross the road if they saw G coming along the street at night. He looked so scary and thuggish that my Mam cried the first time she saw him like that!

Lesson #8 - Graeme has an interesting view on animal care

When house- and dog-sitting for a couple of weeks, Graeme decided one morning that Murphy (the dog) looked like he wanted a cup of coffee (don't ask me how he came to this conclusion). Not wanting to deny Murphy, Graeme obliged, and repeated the trick each morning thereafter. The unsuspecting owners got back to find that their already-hyper hound was now addicted to coffee and looks mournfully for a sip each day (I believe this continues but could be wrong!)

Lesson #9 - G is very thoughtful

Graeme helped his friend Andy move out of his parents' house. At the end of the day, Graeme was worried that Andy might feel a bit strange sleeping in a house on his own for the first time, so Graeme insisted on sleeping on Andy's couch in case he got scared!

Finishing with something to make you smile (and to explain today's theme to maybe the 4 people in the world who were unaware of the The Party of The Year!), go to <http://share.shutterfly.com/action/welcome?sid=0IbNmjZs4ZMXbg¬ag=1> for a few piccies...

Rx

[PS - Rottweiler, your Tuktoyaktuk story really made me laugh, you couldn't make it up!]

Monday Night Ramble

Posted by Rachel, Monday, 16 October 2006

I haven't been able to write an entry for 3 days because I've been feeling a bit lacking in inspiration and sapped of all energy. I'm therefore taking a break from the "update and nostalgia" structure and just going to present these rambling thoughts. [I am aware that this is lacking in both structure and a point, but I thought it was better to write something rather than nothing, rightly or wrongly..]

Much like John Diamond (from his book, C: because cowards get cancer too, which is very good) I don't like the "fight" analogy that accompanies much discussion of cancer. Suggesting that it's a fight suggests that there is something that people can do that stops the cancer and, thus, that anyone who dies has not fought hard enough or wasn't strong enough. I can assure everyone that no one can have "fought" harder against cancer than G. Just because it is going to kill him does not mean he could have done something more. Having seen the stats for grade 4 astrocytomas (aka glioblastoma multiforme for anyone who's interested) it seems amazing that G is still here nearly 2 years down the line. He has handled this with dignity, courage, humility and quiet strength and has undoubtedly been an inspiration to all of us who have watched him. Even now, G has not given up, he has not stopped fighting and so I don't think the cancer has won anything.

I've been thinking a lot over the last few days how this is affecting everyone around us and how the cancer eats away at the rest of us much the way it is eating away at G's brain. Whilst I have watched the cancer debilitate G, I've also watched it pervade every aspect of our lives - it's affected family relationships because of the stress/tension and it's caused arguments; it separates "us" from "them", us being those immediately affected by G's cancer and them being people who are afraid to get in touch with us because they don't know what to say. But just as Graeme has refused to let the cancer win, I'm determined that the tumour is not going to "win"; nothing will ever be the same again but it would be a disservice to Graeme for me to let my life end when his does. Though that's not to say I won't have a few [read many] bumps along the way.

I've noticed over the last few days that there has been a further drop in G's health:

Last week, G was very quiet and sleepy, if he was awake he would respond to a question even if only by a nod/shake of his head; now, even when I am pretty sure G is awake, he is not always responding to questions.

Last week, G might make involuntary moans every so often; the last few days, G has been moaning regularly even when there is no complaint of pain or anything (this is, I am told, "terminal restlessness").

Last week, G would eat little and often; over the last few days, G has barely eaten anything.

So we know things have gone downhill, and we know they're going to continue to go downhill but we don't know how further he's got to slide or how steep the decline will be. We've known for months that he is going to die, and we've been expecting it imminently for a good few weeks now, so whereas last week we thought "He's in the last few days", now we're thinking "we're really in the last few days". Who knows, maybe that'll turn out to be correct, but equally we might be thinking in a week's time "we're really really in the last few days".

People who know me wouldn't be surprised to know that I've read pretty much anything I can get my hands on to try and prepare myself for exactly what is going to happen. The Marie Curie nurse who stayed on Saturday and Sunday night gave us a leaflet called "End of Life - The Facts". No prizes for guessing what that's about - it does exactly what it says on the tin. A friend of mine said "Sounds like the sort of thing that should be read whilst drinking a bottle of wine". My parents haven't read it fully, but I launched straight in and read it in one go. There are different sections on what to expect, including one called "The last few weeks" and one called "the last few days". Although it is only a guide and not a rule book, G has a fair few symptoms from the last few days section, but we've thought of it as the last few days for about a week now so in some ways we're still just guessing.

What is clear is that G has probably had his last proper conversations with friends (and probably family). Thursday was the last time I would say there was real interaction between G and anyone. I was very glad that G was having a good moment just as a friend J arrived. Although I don't know how G would rank them (!) I would say J is one of his two closest friends, if not his closest friend, and I know it meant a lot to J that G was pleased he was there, as G has shown ambivalence at best about having friends around recently. It reminded me of when my Grandad was ill with Alzheimer's and my Mam and I visited him not long before he died. My Mam asked him if he knew who she was and my Grandad stopped, looked insulted and said "Of course, you're my daughter". That meant a lot to my Mam for him to be lucid right at that moment.

The one thing that's been playing on my mind this week is that there are a number of friends/family birthdays this week so I would hate to lose him on those days, lest we have the obvious association that that would bring. On Saturday, it was my cousin's 18th birthday, on Sunday it was the birthday of a friend of ours, on Tuesday it will be G's god-daughter's 1st birthday and on Wednesday it will be my cousin's 40th birthday. It sounds incredibly crass but I just hope that G still be with us when this birthday run finishes. I know there is no good time to lose someone but there are certainly better times than others. It's strange how things change - a year ago I was still hoping that G would have a miraculous recovery; now I'm hoping that there'll be a miracle in the form of him dying on a "convenient" day. Very sad and very bizarre.

Finally, I am going to give you another poem, one that was included in an email hoax a while ago (see <http://urbanlegends.about.com/library/weekly/aa022599.htm>) but which was quoted as a reminder to appreciate everything in a book I read by someone who eventually died from a brain tumour :

Slow Dance

Have you ever watched kids
on a merry-go-round
Or listened to the rain
slapping on the ground?

Ever followed a butterfly's erratic flight
Or gazed at the sun into the fading night?
You better slow down
Don't dance so fast
Time is short
The music won't last

Do you run through each day
on the fly
When you ask "How are you?"
do you hear the reply?

When the day is done,
do you lie in your bed
With the next hundred chores
running through your head?

You'd better slow down
Don't dance so fast
Time is short
The music won't last

Ever told your child,
We'll do it tomorrow
And in your haste,
not see his sorrow?

Ever lost touch,
Let a good friendship die
'Cause you never had time
to call and say "Hi"?

You'd better slow down
Don't dance so fast
Time is short
The music won't last

When you run so fast to get somewhere
You miss half the fun of getting there.
When you worry and hurry through your day,
It is like an unopened gift....
Thrown away...

Life is not a race.
Do take it slower

Hear the music
Before the song is over.

Rx

Comments (8)

1. anon left...
Tuesday, 17 October 2006 1:28 am
So many sparrows fall

Yet no one sees
The One Who made them all
In silence grieves.
If God so loves the sparrows,
How much more
He loves the child
He gave His Son up for.

2. anon left...
Tuesday, 17 October 2006 10:03 am
Keep going kid - you're doing just fine. Love you.xxx

3. anon left...
Tuesday, 17 October 2006 10:48 am
Hang in there, we're proud of you xxxx

4. anon left...
Tuesday, 17 October 2006 11:05 am
I am so proud of you Rach xx

5. anon left...
Tuesday, 17 October 2006 4:58 pm
God has not promised us skies ever blue, Flower strewn pathways all our lives through, God has not promised us sun without rain, Joy without sorrow, peace without pain, But God has promised us strength for each day, rest after labour, light for our way, grace for all trials, help from above, unfailing sympathy, UNDYING LOVE.

6. Belinda left...
Tuesday, 17 October 2006 7:50 pm
At this sad and difficult time for you all, I feel as though I want to leave a little reminder of the hilariously funny and extremely thoughtful Graeme that we know and love. I remember when Graeme opened a leopardskin G String as his secret santa gift one christmas(size large he kept reminding us all) He left it in the office when we went off for our christmas celebrations and after a few hours and many bottles of poser lagers, he decided he would go back for it. What seemed like a great idea to him, had us in fits of laughter as he would have activated the alarm to the police station if he had gone in. Imagine "I am only here for the G String officer" On another occasion, I had made a corned beef pie to bring to work to share. My husband had other ideas and ate the lion's share of it and so there was only one piece left. I gave it to Graeme as I had promised him some. Scott and Alan were most put out and told Graeme in no uncertain terms that he should share it. Graeme's response was "All's fair in love and pies" and then scoffed the lot. I

will always think of him when I get out the rolling pin. Finally, the thoughtful Graeme. We worked together on the mobile unit every tuesday afternoon and one day, he brought me a bottle of organic pure elderflower juice. He told me he had been in the supermarket, saw the juice and thought I would be the one person he knew who would appreciate it. I was so touched by this lovely gesture from a young man to lets just say a more mature woman. It sums up exactly the kind, thoughtful person he is and will always be to those who know him.

7. Tracey left...

Tuesday, 17 October 2006 9:38 pm

Having worked with Big G as I affectionately referred to my young friend - me being one of his more mature lady colleagues as well as only 5ft tall - I can honestly say that he has touched all our lives in a positive way. Graeme and I shared a recent history of being "dairy free " and probably bored each other silly with the topic. He ,of course was far too polite to say this was the case. On one occasion because I was unable to join in a scrumptious round of muffins Mrs T had supplied the Action Team with he made great play of the fact that next time round they would be suitable for me !!! He is such a sweetie. We have all watched the humour and dignity he has had in dealing with this cruel illness with absolute wonder and amazement. To re-iterate a comment in an earlier page I would often say to him that he had to wait until my daughter was old enough and he could marry her as I am sure my husband would have let him over our doorstep no problem - that is indeed testament to a lovely young man.

8. Karen left...

Tuesday, 17 October 2006 9:54 pm

We all want to say so much, do a lot more, but dare not, scared incase we say the wrong thing, do the wrong thing. I've wrote many things in my mind & I just want to come right out & say it, but still my mouth stays closed, & my fingers do not move.

No-one knows how you are all feeling right now, no-one unless they have gone through the same thing themselves. I ask myself questions that I suppose you ask yourself every minute of every day WHY you, to this I have no answer. I am not a religious person, but I know in my heart this saying must be true, when people say he takes the best one's first, he's certainly picked a real beauty here.

He's "Got Some Game"

Posted by Rachel, Tuesday, 17 October 2006

Only a true fan will know why the title to this entry is a west wing reference (and probably only true fans will care!) but it is one of the two WW lines I heard Graeme quote more often than any others - the other being "Let Bartlet be Bartlet" (last year G's fantasy football league was called "Let Turner be Turner!"). Apart from it being one of his favourite lines, I chose it as the title because I think it sums up my bro pretty well! It's such a joy to hear people recount stories, whether funny, moving or just pure Graeme, because I know him very well, but I don't know all the stories. So many, many thanks to those of you who have shared! It is lovely that so many people think so much of him and, if I didn't know it already, it would make me realise how very blessed I am to be able to call him my brother. G has the capacity to infuriate me, he can be very stubborn but he also makes me laugh more than anyone else I've ever met and is the sweetest, most generous and thoughtful brother I could have had. So I think I am safe in saying he's "got some game" ...

West wing makes me think of Graeme for many reasons, not least because it was one of the few occasions where our tastes collided (G being more of a Stargate, Alias, sci-fi kinda guy and me being more of a Friends, ER kinda girl). Both of us can be quite passionate when we like things (some might say obsessive!) so it was great to have something that we could enjoy together, quote at each other and analyse endlessly. It is just an example of the little things I'll miss about him because no one else I know cares as much as I do whether Bartlet vetoed a bill in his first few years in office and, consequently, whether there are continuity errors throughout the show!! Similarly (this one's not west wing related), I imagine no one could even begin to understand why, if either of us asks for mayonnaise, it leads to an exchange that ends with me saying "John Donne"... I could recount a thousand stories to try and explain the ways in which Graeme has shown himself to be a great and fun brother to have, it's a combination of the big, grand gestures, the small thoughtful moments and just the plain silly! But it would still be absolutely impossible to convey exactly what it is about G that makes him so special to all of us.

This "ode to Graeme" reminds me a bit of that oft-quoted expression: "They say such nice things about people at their funerals that it makes me sad that I'm going to miss mine by just a few days..." Cancer may not be everyone's idea of a blessing, but at least it has given everyone a chance to show how much they care for Graeme. I am grateful that we've always been close because I couldn't bear the thought that Graeme would die without knowing how much I love him and how much I admire him. So I may be wracked with sorrow in the not-so-distant future but I will have a whole bunch of great memories to take away, safe in the knowledge that he knows how much I care.

Anyway, on to today's medical update...Graeme has been having trouble eating for the last few days, caused partly because his appetite has decreased but also because he is having trouble swallowing. Last night he couldn't eat tea [remember, this is the proper name for what some of you weirdos call dinner or supper...] and ended up having a banana milkshake instead. So we discussed with the Marie Curie nurse what will happen when he can't take his tablets orally because he had had trouble swallowing them throughout the evening. However, although it's good to know what to expect (he will probably not be given replacements for most of his medication when he can't swallow - the focus will be on pain relief, which can easily be given by injection) we're not quite there yet because G swallowed his tablets today with no real problems. So not a lot really changed today.

We had a visit from G's goddaughter (and birthday girl) and her parents, which was nice. It's upsetting for people to see him, but I'm certain he is aware of people being there and of hearing what they're saying, it's just that he can't respond much. We also had a visit from the vicar, who is a family friend and has thankfully recently recovered from cancer...., we had a sort of blessing/thanksgiving thing (thanksgiving for G's life) and he was definitely aware of what was happening, nodded quite a bit and joined in a bit too.

Although I'm naturally looking back at the memories (most of my early years were spent tramping around after Graeme in a sort of hero-worshipping way!) I'm also trying to see the light at the end of this tumour tunnel..... looking to the future and thinking about how to cope with everything, I can't make any plans for the foreseeable future, Christmas is probably just going to be something to endure, as is New Year, but after that I want to make plans to give me something to aim for. So I've recently booked a skiing trip for the beginning of February - if it is half as effective a stress-relief as it was to go skiing earlier this year, it'll be worth it...

I better go to bed now as I have about 17 hours of training tomorrow.....!

Rx

Comments (2)

1. anon left...

Wednesday, 18 October 2006 9:14 am

As usual, your uplifting and positive thoughts will stay with me throughout the day... you put me to shame. Keep your chin up chuck; you are my inspiration. xx

2. anon left...

Wednesday, 18 October 2006 2:49 pm

You are a great girl Rachel. You are all in my prayers.

Her Name is Marla

Posted by Rachel, Wednesday, 18 October 2006

Today Graeme has mainly been sleeping and continues to say very little even in response to questions. What he does say is increasingly what can only be described as rubbish, such as "They've got the jackets mixed up" and "Death on a stick". He has again eaten very little today but has still provided some sheet-changing entertainment....(inadvertently he very kindly worked around a few training sessions I had via telephone today!) The one thing I always forget to say is that he is not in pain, the headaches etc are being controlled. That's about as good as things can get I guess!

As the comments I've had both on the frog and in emails etc seem to be in favour of the random, freestyling approach of recent days, I am going to continue in that vein today. A guest speaker we had at work once said that when giving speeches, he tends to take the approach of starting to talk and continuing until he figured out what he was going to say. Similarly, I'll just keep writing until I figure out what to say! Of course, as Robert Cormier* said, "The beautiful part of writing is that you don't have to get it right the first time, unlike, say, a brain surgeon." That seems very apt for this humble frog about a guy who's had brain surgery!

I think throughout this Cancer 'Coaster we have all taken Graeme's lead - he has such a great sense of humour that it was only natural there would be an element of humour in the way we've coped. The first tumour humour I remember came right at the beginning - Graeme was admitted to hospital on a Friday afternoon, they told us it was a tumour on the Sunday and he had his operation the following Thursday. Somewhere in between that Sunday and the Thursday (and I'm fairly sure it was either right after the doctors talked to us on the Sunday or very early on the Monday), the Rents and I were sitting with G and he said "Rach, I need you to do something - I need you to name the tumour". This probably sounds incredibly insane to most people (in fact, it probably is insane!) but a partial explanation is that I invariably name anything and everything so it was [sort of] natural that he would ask me to do that. I have to say that I was a bit taken aback by the request because it wasn't the first thing that crossed my mind when being told that my brother has a brain tumour! We discussed it quite a lot, and contemplated naming it after the previously mentioned ex-girlfriend, Psycho, but we decided upon "Marla". We have nothing against anyone called Marla (in fact I don't think we even know anyone called Marla), but it comes from a line in Fight Club: "If I had a tumor, I'd name it Marla." It seemed obvious when G came up with the idea, so the tumour has officially been known as Marla since then!

Overall I'm probably about as calm now as I have been all year (the lull before the storm possibly) and find it amazing how practical one can be in these circumstances. It makes me feel at times that I am a bit weird and that I'm not feeling what I'm supposed to feel because, surely, one should be falling apart at the seams when a close family member is about to die... It seems

like I may be a bit emotionally retarded if I can spend a day making jokes out of everything, half-planning a funeral and making lists of people we need to tell, in between drafting a distribution agreement, changing G's sheets for the third time in a day and planning what's for dinner (just for good measure I usually end the day with a chapter on Catherine de Medici!). Is this normal? Let me rephrase that - in the abnormal circumstances I find myself in, what would be the expected response? There is no rule book saying what you're supposed to do, the books tend to say that any reaction is normal and understandable. But that doesn't mean the response is helpful, right or not selfish. If I succumbed to the temptation that crosses my mind from time to time to fly to somewhere that doesn't have any mobile phone signals and come back in a month when it will be all over and I can start to move on, that wouldn't help the Rents or anyone around me and it certainly wouldn't help me in the long term.

The biggest struggle I've had over the course of the Cancer Coaster is deciding what to do in response to every development. Every single weekend since Graeme was admitted to hospital until I came up here a few weeks ago (approx 87 of them if my calculations are correct) I had to decide whether or not to come home. I've had to weigh up whether or not I thought G wanted me here (invariably yes - at least I hope so!) , whether the Rents wanted/needed me here (invariably yes, but complicated by them not always saying outright what they want) and whether I would feel better seeing him (invariably yes) against the sheer exhaustion of travelling up and down every weekend and the inevitable contributions to GNER! At times I've resented the fact that I have been expected to come up every weekend and that I can't get on with my life; at other times I've been affronted by the suggestion that I might not want to be up here...it's all a big jumble of emotions!

I've sort of muddled along, making decisions on the fly, sometimes listening to advice, sometimes just going on autopilot, sometimes making the wrong decision and making up for it the next week...it's been a bit of a shambles at times, I've kept GNER in business, I've sat on the floor of the trains many times because I've changed plans at the last minute, I've even accidentally upgraded to first class once (truly an accident!) because there is no rhyme or reason to what feels right. If anyone else was in my position, I expect I'd give the most unhelpful and contradictory advice because my conclusion for what it's worth is that you've just gotta do what you gotta do at the time that you gotta do it - it may not always be logical or cost-effective but what the heck.

Having been on the Rollercoaster for the best part of two years, I can tell you what I don't know: I have no idea what someone should say to someone with cancer or close to someone with cancer; I have no idea how you're supposed to react to cancer; I have no idea how to prevent the cancer eating away at the relationships of those immediately affected by cancer; I have no idea how Graeme has coped with everything along the way. But, forgive the Spandau Ballet moment (Huh huh huh hu-uh huh) I know this much is true, I've been truly fortunate to have the support of some great people who've helped me along the way, including invaluable support from people at work - I say this not because some of those kind lawyer people might read this, but because it's true (Huh huh huh hu-uh huh.....)! They've been fantastic and I wouldn't be remotely sane without them

Sorry, this is even more waffly than usual - I'll go before I start quoting more cheesy 80s songs... (you can tell me to stop the freestyling now...!)

Rx

*I'd no idea who he was when I first read that quote! For those like me who can't rest without knowing certain things, I've since Googled him and discovered he's a US author who seems to like food (he's written *The Chocolate War* and *I am The Cheese*)

Comments (2)

1. anon left...

Thursday, 19 October 2006 2:36 am

I'm so proud of you Rachel. I really admire how you are always thinking about other people. Many people could not be so selfless in these circumstances. It's a honour to know you. Graeme would agree :)

2. anon left...

Thursday, 19 October 2006 9:06 am

Ha! this sounds like the old Rach - psycho-babbling on and on! It's good to read and means your tumour humour is and will help you get through this! xxx

Plain Vanilla

Posted by Rachel, Thursday, 19 October 2006

The ironic thing about this frog is that when there is actually quite a lot to say by way of updates on Graeme, I find it harder to write it because I don't want to be the bearer of bad news. But, for fear of leaving it until tomorrow and having even more to write, the bad news is that Graeme has definitely taken another turn for the worse. He had a restless night last night mumbling some more "rubbish". Having complained of headaches throughout the mornnig, the doctor came out and prescribed a painkilling patch which contains an opiate, which should ensure Graeme has a base level of painkillers in him at all times on top of the regular paracetamol and ibuprofen. In addition, he has had to have a couple of doses of Oramorph today because the patch will take a day to kick in. Graeme hasn't eaten anything all day except part of a banana milkshake. It seems his body is shutting down. The doctor said to us that Graeme is definitely in the end stages (although how long the end stages will last is still the million dollar question).

As the doctor's statement is only repetition of what everyone has been saying recently, it didn't really strike me as anything to be unsettled by (or, more accurately, anything new to be unsettled by) but my Mam took it quite badly and spent most of the rest of the day crying, and telling me that I will have to be patient with her and Dad because I will be everything to them once Graeme dies... She also told me that she worries about losing me, and that when I talk about possibly going up Kilimanjaro at the same age that Graeme went up Kili, she worries that I will then develop a brain tumour at the same age etc...she said she knows it's not logical but there you go. I didn't tell her (am not sure it was the time to bring it up) that I have frequent thoughts about whether or not brain tumours are hereditary or even if it's environmental factors, because G and I come from the same gene pool (unless there's something the Rents aren't telling us!) and we have broadly had the same upbringing...In about 8 months I'll be the age that Graeme was when he first developed the tumour (albeit unknowingly at the time) so I do wonder whether doctors would assuage my irrational fears and give me a scan...probably not - it seems particularly irrational and stupid when I write it down. So there you go, I've confirmed to you all in writing that I'm a fruitloop.

Last night my Dad and I went for a walk and he asked me how long I thought Graeme had left (me being the expert on these sort of things!) and then said "I just wondered if you think about that at all". My first thought was "er, the question crosses my mind only, like, 1700 times a day"... but the only thing I told him was what a Marie Curie nurse said the other night, which is that patients rarely last longer than a couple of days once the [pain relief] drivers are put in. Before you wonder whether you missed anything, no, the drivers are not yet in. I'm not sure whether a website is quite the place to be predicting the death of my bro, so I'll leave it at that.

Ms Henrique reminded me today of classic tumour humour when we first met G's surgeon, Mr Kane. He closed the curtain round the bed, shook our hands and as he moved to shake G's hand, he knocked a table and thus a jug of juice fell over. Mr Kane looked at the expressions on our faces and said "Don't worry, I'm better with brains!". With a sense of humour like that, needless to say G liked him ! Mr Kane cemented the deal by talking lots about star wars (Graeme's friend had taken him star wars posters and pinned them up about his hospital bed!)...Actually, that makes me realise it's a bit of a running theme that we make ourselves at home wherever we are - when G was in the hospice a few weeks ago, the chaplain came in and looked at us sprawled out around the room surrounded by bags of sweets, grapes, drinks, krispy kremes, cherry pies and custard with a barbie balloon tied to Graeme's bed and said "It looks like you've settled in ok then..."

Well, goodnight one and all, I hope all is well at your end.

Rx

PS In case anyone was wondering, I am advised that "I am the cheese" is pants and not worth buying; my source tells me "I'll save you the bother: turns out he wasn't cycling across new england at all, he was just nuts". No, that doesn't mean anything to me either, but it's one less book to put on my "to read" pile at least

Comments (1)

1. anon left...

Friday, 20 October 2006 11:29 am

You're still an inspiration. Thoughts and prayers are with you and your family Rachel. x

Not Good

Posted by Rachel, Friday, 20 October 2006

I've been saying this for a while but the end really is approaching. Graeme couldn't take his tablets this morning, and his breathing has changed (a few deep breaths followed by long periods without breathing) so we contacted the nurses who have taken advice from the hospice. They told us not to try and feed him anymore and have now put a driver in. So he no longer has to take any tablets orally, all we can do is wait, wait, wait. The nurses said he likely only to last a couple of days, but as ever nobody knows exactly and because despite everything he is strong, he could continue to defy all expectations. It's a time that we've known is coming for a long long time, but it doesn't make it any nicer or easier.

As people keep telling me that he should still be able to hear us even if he can't respond, I've been rambling on at him more than usual today - I have managed to get a couple of smiles and kisses out of him. He seems quite peaceful and is definitely not in pain at the moment. He has moved further up the painkilling ladder because as well as the opiate patch, there is diamorphine ready and waiting to be put into the driver.

I can't really think of anything else to say...

Rx

Comments (2)

1. Karen left...

Friday, 20 October 2006 9:53 pm

Whilst reading your updates, as we all are hourly infact, my daughter (Lillie-Mae aged 4) & I squashed together on one chair, she caught a glimpse of the tears trickling down my face, as I remembered our early days, in Billingham Jobcentre squashed together on one desk, two chairs though while Billingham Jobcentre Plus rolled out, no-one else around. We knew nothing about benefits, but they put us down there addressing the public. It was all a show, he was a good actor, he's taught me well. She asked me " Why are you crying mammy " I answered " because Graeme a great person who mammy worked with is not very well & I think he's not going to be with us for much longer " Her reply was " Don't cry mammy he'll be up in the sky with all the angels, & Uncle Charlie (who we lost recently), smiling down on us, he will look after us " As she stroked my face she turned to me & said " we'll see him again mammy " , this I truly believe.

Until we meet again Mr.T (He hates Mr.T)

Loves & Best Wishes.

2. Elaine left...

Saturday, 21 October 2006 12:33 pm

I too worked with Graeme at Billingham Jobcentre (Yes I cannot lie it was I who insisted on buying him a Middlesbrough FC mug as part of his leaving present!) Fond memories of a great guy but reason for this message is for you Rachel. I worked for the NHS for 16 years undertaking various projects. Certain cancers are hereditary but to my knowledge (+ that of a nurse I know) brain tumours are not 1 of them. There have been several papers written on the subject of mobile phones, knocks to heads playing certain sports etc. causing such tumours (British Medical Journal would be able to help)but nothing that points to hereditary elements. Hope this helps. Thinking of you all at this difficult time + love to you all. Please give Graeme a big kiss from me. God bless you all.

Stable

Posted by Rachel, Saturday, 21 October 2006

Not sure how many people will check this over the weekend - just a quick note to say that G ate some soup last night, was relatively alert (nodding and smiling every now and then) and had a comfortable night. The nurses have sorted out the medication in the driver this morning and he is sleeping and looks comfortable right now. I asked for a kiss and put my cheek next to his lips and he gave me a kiss, which was nice

Needless to say we are just waiting, passing the time through a combination of computer games and reading. I found my parents crying together a short time ago, which is good in a way cos you just gotta let it all go, no point in holding it inside...

Rx

Comments (1)

1. Chellie left...

Saturday, 21 October 2006 4:26 pm

:: <http://chellie797.onlinediaries.org.uk/>

So sorry, I really don't know what else to say to you Rachel except that you & your family have been in my thoughts for much of the day, & even though we don't know each other from Adam, I feel a connection. I pray God gives you all the strength you need to get through this.

Chelle xxx

Status Quo

Posted by Rachel, Saturday, 21 October 2006

Just another quick update. Graeme has had some headaches today, but they are back under control. He has some alert moments where you know he can hear and understands what you're saying, but doesn't usually respond. If you keep talking at him, though, he responds to some things by a nod/shake of head, so you realise he is "there" but just not responding. I told him his crazy friend Jackie was visiting tomorrow so he better brace himself and he smiled and said "ok". I also asked if he loved me and he nodded (he's still got his charm!) It's quite reassuring to be able to communicate even a little at this stage and I feel less of a muppet rambling on at him knowing it will be registering somewhere.

He seems to be perking up at about 9pm each night - tonight, like last night, he wanted some food at that time, so after eating nothing since the soup he had last night, he's just had some scrambled eggs.

It's been quite a regular day in many ways (regular in the context of the last few weeks). Hopefully he'll have a steady night tonight and we'll see what tomorrow brings. I know G would not have chosen to die at age 28 but given that it's happening, I absolutely believe what people have told me that to some extent people choose when they are ready to die - G could have died weeks ago if he'd have been ready. He is very peaceful, and it's hard not to feel that peace when you're with him. It is very sad to see him like this but it doesn't matter what he looks like or whether he can communicate properly, I just see the same big bro who's always looked out for me, protected me and loved me.

Rx

Comments (3)

1. Chellie left...

Sunday, 22 October 2006 5:30 pm

:: <http://chellie797.onlinediaries.org.uk/>

Hi Rachel,

I've been checking your diary every so often throughout the day.

I think you're right when you say that to a certain extent people can choose when they leave, I also believe that the choosing can be left to a certain extent until the people that love that person are ready to let them go. Not that any of us are ever ready to lose someone we love, but sadly for some of us, there comes a time when we have no choice but to accept it.

To read your words now about the peace surrounding your brother, and how you can feel it, is both sad and uplifting, and the love you have for him shines through everything you write. I think

you consider yourself honoured that he is your brother ... I'm sure that he feels exactly the same about you. We never truly lose anyone, he will always be in your heart.

2. Rachel left...

Sunday, 22 October 2006 8:22 pm

:: <http://teamgraeme.onlinediaries.org.uk/>

Thanks for your message, Chelle. I agree, I think the survival instinct is very strong, and then there does come a point (I think particularly with an illness like cancer) where it is just cruel what people have to put up with and in some senses it makes it easier to let them go (I say "easier" in the literal, relative sense rather than suggesting it is easy) You're right, Graeme and I have always been close, I'm not just losing a brother, I'm losing my oldest and best friend. I'm so blessed to have had him as a brother at all :-) Rx

3. Chellie left...

Monday, 23 October 2006 8:29 am

:: <http://chellie797.onlinediaries.org.uk/>

I agree with what you say Rachel but I also believe that we all have a huge untapped reserve inside us, that we can draw up from the depths when we think there's nothing left to hold on or to let go. It's amazing just how much the human spirit can endure, physically and emotionally we are capable of a lot more than we give ourselves credit for.

Chelle xx

No Change!

Posted by Rachel, Sunday, 22 October 2006

It's been quite a busy day as we have had quite a few visitors throughout the day, some from far away (special mention to crazy Jackie for coming up from London and going back down all in one day!) and some from closer to home. It's been lovely to have some familiar comedy banter going with friends (a visitor from the south caused quite a stir with her pole-dancing stories - yes, YOU, ms weasley, you were talked about long after you left...) and, more importantly, that Graeme is continuing to defy all expectations. He has quite bizarrely brightened up in the last day and for long periods has been alert and speaking and smiling and most importantly not in pain. Having said that, he was a bit agitated this morning and tried to take the catheter out (makes you cringe!) but the agitation has passed and although he has slept throughout the day, those who've visited know for certain that he was aware of them being here to see him.

By no means do I want him to stay alive only to see him suffer but as long as he is not in pain, from a selfish point of view, these are indeed treasured moments. I have had him kiss my cheek thousands (millions) of times, but somehow it's more special at the moment because his love for us as his family and friends continues to defy the cancer and our love for him is definitely registering in him.

Graeme is continuing to do his weird breathing thing which he's been doing for a few days - he takes three deep breaths then stops breathing for up to 20 seconds. It's very unnerving - I find myself holding my own breath and often check his pulse whilst he is holding his breath. A Marie Curie nurse told me it's a common thing but even so it's a bit weird. I think my biggest fear right now is that we will just go in and find him dead - I don't want him to spend his final moments alone. When there isn't a Marie Curie nurse it's very difficult to sleep - on Friday night I was lying awake until about 4am and realised I should have just stayed in his room with him rather

than worrying about him. The baby monitor may tell us if he is crying out with pain, but it won't tell us if he starts to slip away.

After a rocky day on Friday I feel swept along with the love and support of everyone. My Dad checked G's emails and contacted people who he had been in touch with over the last year or so. He has received some lovely emails from people G met in Canada and Kilimanjaro. The resounding message is that it's not just me being biased, Graeme always has been and always will be special! So don't just take my word for it!

As I've announced to the world there's not long left for Graeme, I feel the need to announce periodically that he's still alive, hope that's ok with everyone. I meant to write earlier but it has been a busy day (our last visitor, my Grandma, has just left....I need a stiff drink now)

Anyway, will update soon.

Rx

Comments (2)

1. Anon left...

Monday, 23 October 2006 9:03 am

I wonder if Ms Weasley can teach Mrs Weasley a pole-dancing trick or too or is that a vomit-inducing thought too far??!! Your moments together are very touching...

2. Ms Weasley left...

Monday, 23 October 2006 9:31 am

I like to make an impact wherever I go - I'm just sorry G's bed didn't have large enough poles for me to give him a demonstration.....! I'm glad (I think!) that I provided some comedy banter though. Thank you so very much for giving me the opportunity to come up and share this time with you and Graeme. The love in the Turner house is all enveloping and overwhelming and I feel privileged to have been allowed to share in it a little. Love to you all, always xxxxx

Quick Pic

Posted by Rachel, Monday, 23 October 2006

Nothing has really changed, he has had a few minor headaches but generally ok. I just wanted to share a photo of the man himself when he was on Mt Kilimanjaro. It makes me smile cos it shows him for what he is, an adventurous nutter - just look at the state of him: T-Shirt on top of his fleece, crazy hat and visible sun block....!!!



How Many Ways Are There Of Saying "Still Here"?

Posted by Rachel, Monday, 23 October 2006

Afternoon all,

I was about to update y'all this morning, then my Dad had to go to work to interview someone so I thought I would stay downstairs with Graeme. As he was asleep, I was playing FIFA World Cup on my PSP in my pyjamas whilst wearing my new ski boots to break them in - it's not just Graeme who can look stunning!! Anyway, he was asleep until about half an hour ago and then drank quite a bit of water and a tiny piece of a Krispy Kreme donut! My Mam is now going to give him some soup, which he expressed an interest in. As he has not been eating much for about 5 days now (no more than a bowl of soup or something similar each day) he is naturally getting weaker.

Last night I was about to go to bed so told him but then asked if he wanted me to stay, to which he nodded and said "stay right there" so I stood by him and held his hand for about 30-45 minutes before he started getting sleepy. My Mam then stayed with him until he fell asleep. We have a Marie Curie nurse coming in tonight so that takes away some stress of worrying about him being on his own. The MC nurses will wake us up if anything changes.

The nurse has just arrived to give him the second part of his steroids by injection. Headaches seem to be under control right now so we're still just hanging around...which is still tortuous but will probably seem a picnic looking back on it in a week or so....

Rx

Comments (2)

1. anon left...

Monday, 23 October 2006 2:23 pm

Hey Mrs - please give us a picture of psp/pyjamas and ski boots on you!! We could do with a laugh :) xxx

2. Anon left...

Monday, 23 October 2006 4:02 pm

Glad to hear he's still enjoying the delights of KKs - and especially pleased to hear about your moments together. The hugs and the hand-holding are the truly special moments. Hang in there hun x x

Comments (5)

1. anon left...

Monday, 23 October 2006 1:06 am

Rachel, you have a very cool (and crazy) brother! (...we know who you must take after...:) He's an inspiration to us all. so much for sharing so much of your friendship and siblingship with us. We will always remember what a GREAT friend and brother he has been.

2. Anon left...

Monday, 23 October 2006 8:57 am

Hey Mrs - that is an awesome picture of an incredibly good looking guy. What a picture to treasure..... thanks. xx

3. anon left...

Monday, 23 October 2006 9:28 am

That's a fantastic picture Rach - and you're right, he is rather dashing... How come I never met him before?? :-) Treasure it closely - and thank you so much for sharing it with us xxx

4. Elaine left...

Monday, 23 October 2006 1:39 pm

Great photo. He always was a cool dude who loved his hats - I seem to remember often seeing him in a variety of baseball caps. Thanks for sharing this photo of him with us - this is just as I want to remember him - at his peak.

5. Chris (workmate) left...

Monday, 23 October 2006 1:44 pm

Well, Rach what a picture! He has the look of Fiennes, Scott and Asmundsen all rolled into one. Doesn't look much like the back garden at The Avenue though? No Teepee etc? Anyway as per 12th October, I left a X for you to plonk on G for me and after having read about your million kisses from and to G I would just like to tell you that I too have kissed G albeit in a manly butch way! during his visits to the office and my visits to him, it just seemed better than a bland handshake or see you later. Now, I have been rejected many times (mostly when worse for

wear!)but G being a true gent and crazy explorer/adventurer never did. Now don't get worrying he did enjoy (even more) the attention(and rightly so) of the more mature girls in the office who were always ready and willing to plant one on him. He never tried to pull away especially when their lips and boobs bounded towards him! So, the next time anyone is about to plant one on him just think I have been there too!!! Again Rach, Thanks for sharing such a glorious pic/memory with us all. Chris (X is for G)

Headaches Under Control

Posted by Rachel, Monday, 23 October 2006

Just a quick update before the working day ends - G still stable, he has had a bit more sleep, a bit more Oramorph to reduce headaches and is generally still ok...

Rx

Comments (2)

1. anon left...

Monday, 23 October 2006 5:13 pm

Glad to hear it hun. Thinking of you xxx

2. Chellie left...

Tuesday, 24 October 2006 10:01 am

:: <http://chellie797.onlinediaries.org.uk/>

I don't know what to say, so I'm sending you a hug instead.

((((((((Rachel))))))))

No News Is Good News

Posted by Rachel, Tuesday, 24 October 2006

Hey,

Sorry for causing any panic by not updating the blog earlier today - everything is fine, well, it's obviously not roses are blooming, sun is shining fine, but it's about as fine as it can be at the mo. The reason for my tardy update is sleep - I didn't get to bed until late last night and, as my Dad isn't going into work until later on today, I thought I'd give myself the best possible chance of a long sleep and turn my phone on silent and not set any alarm. Thankfully (for me) it worked and I had more sleep last night than I've had in a while, but I seem to have caused a minor panic...so many apologies.

Graeme is having more trouble swallowing water and has a bit of a chesty cough, but the nurses today have given him something to dry out the mucus that is causing the chestiness. He has had a fair few doses of Oramorph in the last few days to keep the headaches at bay. The problem with Graeme is that, throughout this whole thing, he has never complained of the pain unless it's really bad. It is only if we ask a direct question "have you got a headache" that he might admit to it so it's quite difficult to work out whether the pain is constant or not...

Rx

Comments (1)

1. anon left...

Tuesday, 24 October 2006 11:34 am

Apology accepted!

I'm really pleased you got some sleep to set you up better for the days to come. Also glad to hear G is stable and plodding along and, above all, not in any pain.

Thinking of you all xxxxx

Slight Deterioration

Posted by Rachel, Tuesday, 24 October 2006

Thankfully the medication they introduced into Graeme's driver this morning has solved the chestiness, he hasn't coughed all day and appears more settled as such. The bad news is that he has deteriorated slightly in that he has been responding less and mumbling incoherently throughout the day - when I have understood him it makes little sense - I have been told to challenge him on the peas and that he thinks the man is the gardener... Although he has had one dose of Oramorph he doesn't appear to be in any pain and generally seems comfortable. Graeme is having trouble swallowing much in one go so we're now giving him drinks via a syringe into his mouth.

We had a visit today from a girl who met Graeme on Kili, she had a 5 hour drive, stayed for a couple of hours and then drove back... I am beginning to think that the team should be renamed "Graeme's harem" given all the women of all ages and from all over the world who seem to hold Graeme in high esteem. In all seriousness, it's great that so many people agree with my family and I that Graeme is indeed very special (and not just in a special needs sort of way...)

Lest you think I'm looking at this through rose-tinted glasses, I should tell you that Graeme used to cheat at every board game we played when we were kids....baaaaaaaaaaaaaad Graeme!

The Rents and I are going to start taking shifts as such so there is always someone there with Graeme without us all knackered ourselves too much...think I might volunteer for the all-night shift, it will remind me of work

I could rant about how my doctors in London were incredibly insensitive and rude when I rang up for a sick note....but I'm going to try and let that one go so I'll keep my mouth shut

Rx

Comments (3)

1. jp left...

Tuesday, 24 October 2006 8:34 pm

we could send you a waffle red jumper from london if you are going to be up all night x

2. anon left...

Wednesday, 25 October 2006 9:26 am

..... followed by an egg and bacon roll from the LSE caff at the back.....

3. nicola (ex Action team) left...

Wednesday, 25 October 2006 9:40 am

Want to say something significant but can only send you all my love and lovely thoughts for graeme. xx

Not Much Response

Posted by Rachel, Wednesday, 25 October 2006

Not good news to report I'm afraid.

Unfortunately, Graeme hasn't responded to anything since last night (around about 9/10pm). He seemed to have a comfortable night (I stayed up until 2am, Mam stayed up until 5am, when Dad got up) but this morning appears quite agitated. He is not responding in any way (whether verbally, squeezing hand or nods/shakes) so he can't tell us whether he's in any pain. We just gave him some Oramorph as it looks like he might be in pain, and when Dad told him he was going to put Oramorph in his mouth via syringe, G opened his mouth slightly, so it appears that he is aware of what's going on but just can't respond. It could be the tumour affecting his ability to respond or it could be that he is too weak to respond. He now hasn't been eating or drinking much for the best part of a week....

My Dad thinks he looks a bit frightened too, so all we can do is be there and try and calm/reassure him (which is quite ironic given that neither the rents or I are feeling particularly calm or reassuring). At least we know he can hear us (given the slight opening of mouth).

I'll write another update later on. Thanks for kind messages, sorry I don't have much time to respond to them all individually.

Rx

PS An egg and bacon roll would be heavenly right now, but I don't want to deprive jp of more waffle print forehead moments so you can keep that jumper...

Comments (1)

1. anon left...

Wednesday, 25 October 2006 10:08 am

I guess it's not just G who is frightened. The biggest hugs in the world are on their way to you - I'm thinking of you all.

Phone's on 24/7 and we'e only a car journey away should you ever need anything - even KKs.

You're all amazing, keep going xxxx

Still No Response

Posted by Rachel, Wednesday, 25 October 2006

Graeme's agitation has lessened a bit but we still don't know if he's in pain because he is not responding to any questions or comments. A couple of times G has tried to speak but has been unable to say anything coherently or loud enough to work out what he was trying to say. He is continuing to do his breathing thang where he holds his breath for up to 20 seconds after 3 deep breaths. Needless to say he has had nothing to eat today; he has had a bit more apple juice but that's it.

His medazelam is being increased tomorrow which should reduce agitation. It is possible that he was having fits this morning as he would periodically grip my hand quite tightly just before the right hand side of his body shuddered... the increased medazelam should control that.

We have taken turns sitting right next to him holding his hand, but we generally have all been sitting in the room either reading or psp-ing (I am getting better on Fifa World Cup 2006 and have finished 2 books today...)

Just wanted to get this update in before the working day ended for some of you...

Take care,

Rx

Comments (5)

1. Mandy left...

Wednesday, 25 October 2006 5:20 pm

Hang in the Rachel the Oswells are so proud of you all.xx

2. anon left...

Wednesday, 25 October 2006 5:28 pm

Weasley love and hugs for you all xxx

3. anon left...

Wednesday, 25 October 2006 5:30 pm

Rachel - I did try to send this message to one of your earlier updates but am not sure I was successful. You are a truly amazing person. You are as wonderful a sister to Graeme as he is a brother to you. You are also a brilliant daughter. Stay strong hon xxx

4. Karen left...

Wednesday, 25 October 2006 10:15 pm

Can I just say in response to your entry yesterday, your bro has talent when it comes to the ladies! I agree with you regarding re-naming the team to "'Graeme's Harem".

In the early days at Billingham JCP Graeme & a few other male members of staff who will remain anonymous, use to participate in a "Gentleman's Letch" rating the young, good looking girl customers, un-be known to these poor girls, & I can confirm he was a pure gentleman threw out this ritual, well should I say he never got caught leering.

We would often swap little stories & from this I could tell that the four of you were so close. I always remember one Saturday Morning overtime we laughed so hard, Graeme started telling me a story I think it was about when you when you would come home from university, don't know what it was really about now, but there was some mention of you insisting on your Grandma or Mam making porridge!!!!!! Help???? We lost track of the story but we laughed & laughed. Doesn't sound very funny now, but I'm smiling whilst typing this, remembering this daft moment, & we had many. I don't know what was wrong with us, then the conversation went right of the rails & there was a comment about marmalade sandwiches & Paddington Bear. What's this all about? You'll have to rack your brains & let me know.

Anyway to sum it all up he's a fun loving Guy, & I feel privileged to be your friend. I bet there are loads of these daft stories about, he is as wacky as I am.

Rachel I don't think you could have picked a better photo than the one you posted on this site, for me anyway. After my daughter Lillie Mae had commented to me (which I posted, in a previous message), don't worry mammy he'll be sat on a cloud smiling at us, you could get any closer. This is how I picture him in my mind, On top of the world, so confident & strong.

You little Minx Mr.T

Lots of love as always

KazzaP

Settled After a Rough Night

Posted by Rachel, Thursday, 26 October 2006

After being agitated for much of the day and appearing to have little fits, the nurses who came in at about 6pm gave Graeme a shot of Midazolam to help calm him down and control shaking/fitting. Unfortunately it had little effect so we called the out of hours number for our PCT. A doctor came around 9, recommended giving him another shot and increasing the strength of medication in the driver, so we contacted the local hospice's out of hours team who came and did that at about half 10/11. That did settle him down a bit but he became a bit more agitated at about 2am so we again called the hospice team, who came and give him another shot of Midazolam. This finally did the trick completely and Graeme was nice and settled when I went to bed at 4am...

He has had some Oramorph this morning and the increased dose of Midazolam in his driver appears to have had an effect as he has had no more shots but looks very peaceful and settled again. Graeme still hasn't responded to anything and he didn't eat anything yesterday but the best we can hope for in these circumstances is for G to be comfortable. It is bad enough watching him deteriorate when he's in no pain and comfortable but yesterday was about 100 times worse than usual because he wasn't settled, was clearly agitated and couldn't tell us what we could do to help.

So hopefully everything's under control for now.

One final thing, if you've seen the comment left by Karen yesterday, I'm afraid I can't shed any light on why I might have been demanding porridge and why that might be funny! Sorry, Karen, am desperately trying to think of what that might relate to, but I am like a deer with no eyes!

Rx

Calpol and Chain Stoking *

Posted by Rachel, Thursday, 26 October 2006

Graeme has fortunately not been agitated today as the increased midazolam appears to be doing the trick. But he has made no response to anything and has just been sleeping/lying peacefully all day. He could well be in a coma at times but it might just be that he hasn't got the energy to respond. He had a bit of a temperature so the nurses recommended calpol, which a nursing friend of ours got Graeme to take (that was a nice way of saying Jo force fed him calpol!) That appears to have reduced his temperature somewhat.

He is still chain stoking (which is the term for his 3 breaths on, 7 breaths off thing) but when he is breathing it appears to be more shallow, which we're told is a sign of further deterioration. The doctor came today to check that G was settled and said he obviously can't go on like this much longer. Whilst I believe him and, quite frankly, more importantly I know it to be true just by looking at G, it does make me smile in a way that they've been writing G off for weeks now and he has not met their expectations (probably an example of how stubborn G is!)

So we've had another tortuous day of waiting, waiting and more waiting, without anything really happening. The only things I can think of that happened today were that I nearly finished another book and that I had to throw away a glass of red wine because a fly got in...exciting huh!

It strikes me that in addition to the absolute sadness of losing Graeme, we are also going to lose the main focus of our lives in the form of the cancer. We won't be building our lives around scans, appointments, treatments, etc, which will be incredibly strange and disorientating for us. Cancer is obviously not a nice focus to have had for the best part of 2 years, but this tumour is such a massive part of our lives, we'll not be picking up the pieces of our lives, we'll have to go out and find the pieces to start with. It'll be bad enough trying to get on with things but I don't have a normal life to go back to and adapt to life sans Graeme, as I hadn't properly settled into a routine in London before Graeme was first diagnosed. I know that things will never be the same without Graeme and that we won't get over it as such, we'll just learn how best to deal with everything. I think the most helpful phrase I've heard over the last year or so is that there will be a "new normal" - not one that we would have chosen, not one that we think we can cope with, but one we've been given all the same. I've said it before (and I hope people remind me of this) we've got to go on because that is undoubtedly what G would want us to do.

For those who are interested, one of the least helpful things anyone's said to me went something like "well, as human beings we have attachments to other human beings, so it's only natural that we feel sad at the thought of losing someone". Well, duh, thanks for that insightful comment, I was wondering why I was sad that my brother has cancer...(don't worry, there's no way the person who said this will be reading this so I'm not trying to make anyone feel useless or guilty!)

G'night,

Rx

PS Just to pass on my wisdom, Catherine de Medici: A Biography by Leonie Frieda is truly awesome, Triptych by Karin Slaughter is rubbish (and I usually love her books).

* The term used by the doctor sounded like Chain Stoking but was later found to be Cheyne-Stokes.

Comments (1)

1. a friend left...

Friday, 27 October 2006 2:46 am

Rachel remember that your friends are there for you.

If you want to talk about what will be,

Come and sit with me,

and cry on my shoulder,

I'm a friend.

If you want to talk about it anymore,

Lie here on the floor

and cry on my shoulder,

I'm a friend.

From Cry, Back to Bedlam by James Blunt

Graeme Turner, 29 July 1978 - 27 October 2006

Posted by Rachel, Friday, 27 October 2006

I think a lot of you will have heard by now that Graeme died peacefully this morning.

I know that a lot of times people want to be reassuring by saying someone has died peacefully but in Graeme's case it truly was. Unbeknownst to us, the Marie Curie nurse had called the out of hours medical team at 1am as Graeme had been getting a bit agitated. They gave him a shot of midazolam, a shot of diamorphine and something to ease the rattling chest he had. This immediately calmed him down. A few hours later the MC nurse noticed that his breathing had changed and his chest was rattling again so called the out of hours team. On the out of hours' team advice, the MC nurse woke my parents up at 4.45am, who woke me up.

Graeme's breathing was, instead of being chain stoking, regular but shallow and he was only breathing through one lung. His cheeks were cool although the rest of him was fairly warm. They said he calmed down when the nurses stroked his hand so we knew he was aware we were there. The nurses told us that he could die within an hour. As ever, G defied the odds and did things his own way - he died three hours after we were woken up, at 7.45am. During those three hours, my Mam, Dad and I just sat next to him, held his hand, told him we loved him, and told him that it was ok for him to let go, that he would be in peace. We swapped a few stories of funny and nice moments, sad of course but knowing that he was at peace, in no pain and that he was surrounded by love. The nurses had left by 7 so we continued to sit and drink tea/coffee. I found my long sleeved T-Shirt that says "I [heart] G" and put that on. We knew he was coming towards the end as his face and hands got cooler and there was longer between breaths, so we just kept reassuring him and telling him we loved him. My Dad told him to go in his own time; my Mam told him that we didn't want to lose him so we were sad but that we couldn't go with him; I whispered to him that I would look after Mam and Dad as best I could; my parents and I smiled

that you never could rush G into anything. After a couple of false starts where we thought he'd stopped breathing, he finally did, my mam said "Quarter to 8" and we all started crying. If I think that I've been through all the emotions in the last couple of years, that has only continued today. I feel sad that I'm never going to hear him or see him again; I feel relieved that he is no longer suffering; I can't believe that I watched my 28 year old brother die and that he's the first dead person I've ever seen; I feel a bit scared about how we'll get through all this; I feel utter joy that I had such an amazing person as my brother and friend; I feel peaceful knowing that if you have to lose someone, you couldn't lose someone in a more moving, peaceful and loving way; I feel surrounded by the love and best wishes of all those around me; I feel another hundred things that I can't express in words.

The rents are, naturally, sad, but we are about as ok as you can get. It was expected and inevitable which doesn't make it any easier but it does make it less shocking and we know that he couldn't have done any more to keep on living and we couldn't have done anymore to show him how utterly and unconditionally we loved him.

Rest in peace, Graeme, we love you.

Rx

Comments (6)

1. Chellie left...

Friday, 27 October 2006 12:25 pm

:: <http://chellie797.onlinediaries.org.uk/>

Rachel,

I could say so much and it would probably mean so little. He will always be a part of you because love endures, you will never ever lose that.

To you and your family I offer my thoughts, my prayers, my heartfelt sympathies. Love will help you through, God bless you all.

Chelle xxx

2. Tracey Latteman left...

Friday, 27 October 2006 6:10 pm

Rachel. I have just heard of Graham's passing and wanted to let you know that you are in my thoughts. Whilst he is not here in body, he will continue to live on in your hearts so will never be far away. It's like he is in the house but just in another room, you can't see him but that doesn't mean he's not there in some way. When you love someone they stay part of your life forever. These are cliché's I know but true nonetheless. Take care, take time for you and remember that we are thinking of you at C&B. Tracey

3. Em left...

Friday, 27 October 2006 6:57 pm

There could be no better tribute to a wonderful brother.

My love and thoughts are with you constantly. I have so much I would love to say to you, but it is hard to put into words at this time.

Anything at all and I'm only a car journey away. xx

4. Eileen left...

Friday, 27 October 2006 8:48 pm

I was so sad to hear the news about Graeme today. I worked with Graeme when he first joined the Jobcentre, and like many of his colleagues have hoped and prayed for him. Have lots of fond memories. He did everything well, even to the end. What a brave young man. I guess God needed another hockey player or a mountaineer. Rest in Peace Graeme

5. craig (karens partner) left...

Saturday, 28 October 2006 11:59 am

I never meet graeme but have heard all about him from karen he sounded like a lovely guy.as a spiritualist & trainee medium I know that because of your love for g he will never be far from his family & friends every time you think of him he will be there. love craig

6. caroline left...

Wednesday, 15 November 2006 10:38 pm

karen

I met graeme in canada while we were volunteering. we meet many people in our lives but not all stay in our memories. graeme did. he made me laugh so much. I am not suprised that so many people attended his service because he had such a positive affect on people. I have just had a baby daughter and if she is only half the person that graeme has been then I will be a very lucky person. my thoughts are with you and thankyou for sharing such personal thoughts with us all.

Funeral

Posted by Rachel, Friday, 27 October 2006

Graeme's funeral will be on Friday 3 November at 12 noon at St Mark's Church, Stockton.

Today has been a long day so far, but we're ok - there's been some laughter about some of Graeme's finest moments. The funeral seems a long time away but we'll just have to take it a step at a time, just like we've been doing for the best part of 2 years.

Rx

Comments (1)

1. anon left...

Saturday, 28 October 2006 11:43 am

I promised you I'd post this Rach.

Hugs always xxxx

The Rose beyond the Wall

A rose once grew where all could see, sheltered beside a garden wall. And, as the days passed swiftly by, it spread its branches, straight and tall... One day, a beam of light shone through a crevice that had opened wide- The rose bent gently toward its warmth then passed beyond to the other side... Now, you who deeply feel its loss, be comforted-the rose blooms there- Its beauty even greater now, nurtured by God's own loving care.

Has It Only Been 2 Days...?

Posted by Rachel, Sunday, 29 October 2006

I saw the date on Sky News (it turns out there's a whole world out there...) today and I couldn't believe that it's only been 2 days since Graeme died. So much seems to have happened...

On Friday I spent the evening with 7 of G's closest mates (also my mates) which was just a perfect way to end such a memorably sad day. We had pizza, drank stella (of course!) and wine, chatted about G amongst other things and just had a good night. I got home at about 1 and was pretty convinced the exhaustion would kick in and I'd sleep for England. I slept for a few hours and dreamt constantly of Graeme: I had a recurring dream that although the undertakers had taken him away, he hadn't really died and they brought him back, he still had cancer but was back in the stage he was at in about May, so we knew we had to face everything again....I woke at 4.45am (which was the time the nurses woke us up the previous morning to say G was about to die) and didn't sleep after that. So yesterday morning I felt very unsettled by the dreams. We all agreed that yesterday was harder than Friday, possibly because we had lots of flowers and cards delivered and a detailed visit from the undertaker about funeral arrangements (who is a family friend and who on Friday was crying when he came to have the first discussion and had to go into the kitchen to pull himself together before continuing with the meeting).

So yesterday friends and I took ourselves off for lunch and stayed in the pub drinking stella, had a quick visit back to see my parents, then went off for chinese takeaway and a few more drinks - again, just a lovely way to spend the time reminiscing, laughing and joking (the wonderful thing is that you can't spend more than 5 minutes thinking or talking about Graeme without referring to a funny story). This morning I felt a lot more refreshed than I did yesterday, possibly because I dreamt about G a bit but not as much as the previous night.

A lot of today has been spent planning the funeral service, which is now pretty much sorted. The wake is going to be at the local cricket club, which is where G's hockey club is based. The hockey club have been amazing, they are organising and paying for the food and room hire for the wake. They cancelled the match of G's actual team and had a minute's silence before the other matches yesterday and are planning a trophy in G's name to be given to someone each year who has the same sort of qualities as G - 100% committed if not technically the best player. It was something my parents were thinking of so it was nice that the club had already planned it.

Tomorrow we have to choose flowers and pick up the death certificate. I guess that means we'll have to start shutting bank accounts etc... so there's a lot to do in some senses, but it's really weird not having the constant influx of nurses etc.

It's been a tough day for my Mam, but we just have to take things a step at a time. Really, there are no words to comfort anyone because words can't make up for the void. We've got to hold on to the memories and be glad that the number of people who are sad is just a reflection of how utterly awesome he was. Those who are blissfully ignorant of the sadness caused by Graeme's death are the unlucky ones because they never got to know the crazy fool!

Rx

Comments (3)

1. anon left...

Monday, 30 October 2006 10:08 am

Just to say our minds think the same way: on Friday we went out and downed a few Stellas in memory of the Great Man. xxx

2. mcbollins left...

Tuesday, 31 October 2006 2:33 am

'Well, here at last, dear friends, on the shores of the Sea comes the end of our fellowship in middle-earth. Go in peace! I will not say; do not weep; for not all tears are an evil.'

Then Frodo kissed Merry and Pippin, and last of all Sam, and went aboard; and the sails were drawn up, and the wind blew, and slowly the ship slipped away down the long grey firth; and the light of the glass of Galadriel that Frodo bore glimmered and was lost. And the ship went out into the High Sea and passed on into the West, until at last on a night of rain Frodo smelled a sweet fragrance on the air and heard the sound of singing that came over the water. And then it seemed to him that as in his dream in the house of Bombadil, the grey rain-curtain turned all to sliver glass and was rolled back, and he beheld white shores and beyond them a far green country under a swift sunrise.

But to Sam the evening deepened to darkness as he stood at the Haven; and as he looked at the grey sea he saw only a shadow on the waters that was soon lost in the West. There he stood far into the night, hearing only the sigh and murmur of the waves on the shores of middle-earth, and the sound of them sank deep into his heart. Beside him stood Merry and Pippin, and they were silent.

At last the three companions turned away, and never again looking back they rode slowly homewards; and they spoke no word to one another until they came back to the Shire, but each had great comfort in his friends on the long grey road.

The Return of the King, JRR Tolkien

3. Lisa left...

Thursday, 2 November 2006 5:40 pm

I only knew Graeme briefly. We were in the same team that climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro, but he was quite a character, and good fun to have around. I'm sure he will be sorely missed by all who knew and loved him best. In keeping with what seems to be tradition amongst those close to him, I will go home this evening crack open a can of Stella!

Donations

Posted by Rachel, Tuesday, 31 October 2006

The announcement went into the local paper last night:

TURNER, Graeme. On October 27, peacefully at home surrounded by his loving family, after an illness borne with great courage, dignity and strength, Graeme, aged 28 years. Precious son of Keith and Anne, amazing brother of Rachel dearly loved grandson of Norah and the late Ivor, Jim and Anne. Service in St Mark's Church, Fairfield, Stockton Friday, November 3 at 12 noon, prior to cremation at Teesside Crematorium. Friends please meet at church. Enquiries and floral tributes to Crake and Mallon Funeral Service, 45 Norton Road, Sotckton. Tel 611716. If desired, donations may be sent to Cancer Research UK, PO Box 123 London WC2A 3PX.

We didn't want to exclude people who wanted to send flowers but would be perfectly happy for people to send donations instead. My Dad has set up a website via Cancer Research UK where

you can make donations directly in memory of the man himself
-http://donateinmemory.cancerresearchuk.org/pp_2052/Graeme_Turner.aspx

A reporter from the local rag, the Evening Gazette, has just been round to talk to us about our boy. They want to do a tribute to him in the paper as he died so young. It should go in tomorrow. It seems fitting that he will be honoured and remembered in a special way.

Rx

Comments (2)

1. anon left...

Tuesday, 31 October 2006 1:07 pm

Your boy will always be remembered in a special way by everyone who knew him. It's nice though that people who didn't know him will be able to read about how incredible he was. xx

2. Carol left...

Wednesday, 1 November 2006 12:06 am

Rachel, Anne and Keith, I found these words and knew they could have been written about Graeme.

" Not,how did he die, but how did he live? Not, what did he gain, but what did he give? These are the units to measure the worth Of a man as a man, regardless of birth. Not what was his church, nor what was his creed? But had he befriended those really in need? Was he ever ready, with word of good cheer, To bring back a smile, or banish a tear? Not what did the sketch in the newspaper say, But how many were sorry when he passed away!"

Graeme was all of these things, A good friend with a wicked sense of humour and always kept me positive about my own mam's illness. Graeme was a friend with unmeasurable qualities and I like so very many will miss him!

Fame At Last

Posted by Rachel, Thursday, 2 November 2006

Well, Graeme said he wanted to be famous by the time he was 30....a lovely article appeared in the local paper today.

Headline : Graeme never stopped smiling

Sub-headline: Tributes Paid to battling sportsman

Picture: Kilimanjaro one I Posted by Rachel, in an earlier entry with the caption "BRAVE: Tributes have been paid to keen Teesside sportsman Graeme Turner, who has lost his battle with cancer"

Article:

"Tributes were today paid to a courageous Teesside sportsman who has lost his battle with cancer. Graeme Turner, 28, died at his Stockton home surrounded by his family on Friday. He

was diagnosed with a brain tumour last January. But from July this year he deteriorated as the tumour grew and began to have a serious affect on his health, mobility and memory.

"He never complained throughout his whole illness," said his sister Rachel, who now lives in London. "He never lost any spirit. he was still smiling right until he could not physically smile anymore."

Graeme loved sport. He captained Stockton Hockey Club's fourth team and played five-a-side football every Sunday at Billingham Forum. His mother Anne said: "He was crazy about football and had a passion for Newcastle United."

His father Keith said when Newcastle signed Alan Shearer on Graeme's 18th birthday it was the best present he could ever have wished for.

Graeme, who lived in The Avenue, Stockton, also enjoyed walking and in 2004 he climbed Mount Kilimanjaro to raise money for Scope.

"He loved helping people," said Keith, who explained Graeme often coached youngsters locally and spent five months in Canada volunteering as a teaching assistant. Anne said: "He touched everybody he met. He was absolutely devoted to his friends and family."

Graeme grew up in Stockton and attended Elm Tree Infant School, St Mark's Junior School, Grangefield School and Stockton Sixth Form College before graduating from Newcastle University. During his university years, he worked part-time at Wickes and later became an assistant store manager in Stockton. In 2003 he joined the civil service and most recently worked at Hartlepool's Jobcentre Plus.

After he finished his radiotherapy treatment, his family threw a big party and sold 350 orange wristbands with "Team Graeme" on them in aid of Cancer Research.

By July Graeme was too ill to work. Gradually he got weaker but was able to stay at home thanks to support from the health service. Keith said "The district nurses have been fantastic. And the Marie Curie nurses are a wonderful team of people." Anne said "His group of friends have been quite inspirational. We definitely would not have got through it without them."

Simon Jones, president of Stockton Hockey Club, said: "he will be remembered by the players for always being witty and always prepared to have a go and muck in and help others."

Graeme's funeral takes place at St Mark's Church, Fairfield, Stockton, tomorrow at noon. Donations in his memory can be made at donateinmemory.cancerresearchuk.org/pp_2052/Graeme_Turner.aspx

A Fitting Farewell

Posted by Rachel, Saturday, 4 November 2006

I remember the first day Graeme was transferred to James Cook Hospital (23 January 2005) and we had an appointment with one of the doctors who explained that there was definitely a tumour inside G's brain and he would need surgery etc. As we weren't allowed to use mobile phones on the ward, I went outside to text/ring people. I remember saying to people that I just kept

imagining myself at Graeme's funeral. I can't remember what I imagined but I am certain it is nothing like what we experienced yesterday.

I am not sure I have the words to describe the day that we prayed so hard to avoid.

My day started at about 7/7.30am when I woke up with a feeling of dread in my stomach that the day had arrived and we would actually have to say goodbye to the brother I've loved and admired so much. After a short time tossing and turning I finally got up and faced the music as such. My Dad was already up sorting out a few things. We finalised the CDs for the music, I finally figured out what I wanted to write on the flowers and the family flowers arrived, closely followed by some friends and family and another pile of sympathy cards through the post. By the time I had got dressed in my black suit (and black and white shirt of course!), the house seemed a hub of activity. The friends and family who were going to be in the lead cars arrived and we all kind of stood around, chatting a bit and waiting for Graeme to arrive.

As the day was a beautiful sunny day with a clear sky (although pretty cold) Jim, the funeral director, asked if we wanted to go in the cars or walk behind the hearse (the church is literally round the corner) so we chose to walk. They had arranged G's Newcastle United shirt on the bottom of his coffin brilliantly so it draped over showing "Turner 9". The "G" of flowers I had chosen was put at the base so that is what I kept seeing every time I looked at the coffin. When we arrived at the church there must have been 50 people waiting to go into the church. The vicar came out and told us they were struggling to find places to put people which is how it should be. We watched 6 of G's mates carry him, and then followed them in to the service. I stood between my parents and held their hands. When we entered the church, it was just unbelievable, the place was heaving with black suits and there was barely enough space to walk down the aisle. I hope people smiled at the choice of music for the entrance (the opening credits to Star Wars) as we just couldn't have a service for G without star wars music somewhere...

The "Kili Photo" was placed on top of his coffin and the service started. I read a poem ("He is Gone") - I managed to get through it ok and was glad I had chosen to speak first. Then one of G's best mates, James, read a poem ("A Child Loaned") and then my Dad spoke beautifully and movingly about G and read out a poem he wrote the night before G died. I will ask my Dad to upload his speech on to the website - it was the only time during the service that I could hear a wave of sobbing. We then played a couple of minutes of "Everybody Hurts" by REM which was G's favourite song.

The address by Meg was brilliant and captured a lot of G's traits and achievements, and after prayers and the hymn "Make me a channel of your peace" there was the commendation and we had an exit procession to the music "Wild Theme" from the movie "Local Hero", which is the song the Newcastle players always come out to at St James' Park.

The trip to the crematorium was about 5 miles. We said in our car that G (being so fit and a keen walker) would be saying we should have walked behind the hearse all the way...I was told they said the same thing in the second car and then said he would have been wondering why lads hadn't carried him all the way... For all of us to be thinking the same thing tells me that is exactly what G would have wanted!

The crem was a short, 5 minute service, where we again used the Local Hero music to walk in to. The lads who carried G in said he seemed much heavier going into the crem and they didn't want to step away when they had put him down because they knew it was the last thing they had done for him. It was very sad when we watched the curtain go around G's coffin and then we again had Everybody Hurts playing before we left and looked at the flowers. As we were driving out of

the crem my Grandma noticed one magpie on a branch of a tree next to the chapel we'd been in. It seemed pretty fitting given that the Toon Army are known as the Magpies and the expression says "One for sorrow...."

We went to the cricket club for the wake where there were again a lot of people. The highlight was getting James to wear G's newcastle shirt (NUFC being pretty close to the incarnation of evil to Smoggie James!) but it was also nice because we had a book for people to write memories or tributes to G - there are some lovely thoughts and memories.

Overall Graeme could not have been more fittingly remembered - it was an incredibly sad thing to have to do, but it was also incredibly beautiful and personal to Graeme. He lived life to the fullest and cared for people and was honoured in a way that he deserved. The church warden counted people and there were 338 people in the church (it seated 150!), the funeral director said there were 110 people at the crem and I think a fair proportion of all those people came to the wake. The collection at church (which will go to Cancer Research UK) came to £535, there was a further collection at the wake of £123 and so far £870 has been donated through the website. So already we have raised over £1500 for Cancer Research and that is before we start running marathons, climbing mountains and doing anything else we can think of to raise money in the name of "Team Graeme".

So a big thank you to all who have donated. G died having given so much to so many people in his short 28 years on earth and I am grateful that people have given so generously in his name.

We've said farewell to a great guy and we've started the first day of the "new normal". It goes without saying that we'll think of Graeme in everything that we do and although it feels like there is a giant piece of me missing I also feel like I have been left with so much of Graeme through the things he did, the memories I have and the things I've been told about him. I am so proud to be his sister.

Rx

Comments (6)

1. anon left...

Sunday, 5 November 2006 4:00 pm

And I'm so proud to have known him, and to be called your friend.

It is not G who is so very incredible: the Turner family is too. He will live on in the hearts, minds and actions of you all.

Love and hugs to you all xxx

2. SUE O'BRIEN left...

Sunday, 5 November 2006 4:19 pm

I have only just plucked up the courage to read your blog from start to finish and can only say Wow!

What an intense and emotional journey! And so touchingly and bravely documented for everyone else to share.

I've been through have a box of tissues (a piffling amount I'm sure compared to your families usage over the past few months, I would imagine) and several hours reading it.

I, like you in an earlier comment, hoped that Graeme would enjoy a miraculous recovery, but suspected deep in the back of my mind that this was not going to be - having watched a couple of my close friends succumb to this cruel and hideous disease in the last few years.

I'm so glad your dad contacted me by email and in doing so I was able to provide the photo of G on Kili - looking fabulous - that will now be his visual legacy. I wonder if there are mountains in heaven? If so then he'll surely be up there having a go.

Good luck to all your family with the 'new normal'. I too (like 'karen's partner') believe that the spirit remains with you. Doesn't beat the real thing, but it's the next best and means you can talk to G whenever and where ever you feel like it.

3. Elaine left...

Monday, 6 November 2006 1:09 pm

Rachel. As you know I was gutted not to be able to attend the big guy's final journey so a big thankyou for describing the "event" so eloquently for me. There is a beautiful Lutheran church in Reykjavik and I went there and lit a candle and prayed for him. As did everyone I had prayed for a miracle which was not to be but the legacy he has left and the memories we all share are a true testimony to what a special man we were privileged to have known albeit for a brief time. My love and deep admiration to you all.

4. Nicola (HAT) left...

Tuesday, 7 November 2006 9:52 am

To all the family....I am so sorry to have missed the fantastic farewell for G., but on Friday, I climbed up out of Glenridding in the Lakes and sat in the sunshine looking at the mountains and raised a cup of coffee to Graeme. I will never forget him. xxxx

5. Karen left...

Tuesday, 14 November 2006 2:08 pm

He did touch people's hearts even when they were in his company for only moments...his legacy will live on in our hearts.....x

6. Phil(Hat) left...

Wednesday, 22 November 2006 2:06 pm

I only Knew Graeme for a couple of years but in that time I got to Know a special person. He always said I was one of he's successes, ie he got me a job, but he was also a very good friend. I was so sorry that I could not attend his farewell but I was in hospital on the day. 'G' it was a honour and pleasure to have known you for this short time and I will deeply miss you and your sense of humour.

Funeral Poems And Speeches

Posted by Rachel, Wednesday, 15 November 2006

I just wanted to add the poems and speeches that were read at Graeme's funeral because it completes the picture for those of you who weren't there and it might be something to refer to for those of you who were...

I am not sure that this frog is the right place for me to write updates about life post-Graeme because it is all about the inspirational team captain. I would say that time has been going incredibly slowly. I can't believe it's not even 3 weeks since Graeme died, I just looked at a

couple of the frog entries from the week before he died and it seems like a lifetime ago, probably because so much has changed since then. Team Graeme has now gone into a new phase, which is to raise money in memory of our boy - I've not yet decided whether to continue to use this blog to give details of any TG events or fundraising, or whether to use another website. In case I go quiet on the frog front and you want to get in touch, for those who don't have it, my email address is rach.turner@ntlworld.com.

Anyway, here are the speeches/poems read at the funeral:

Poem #1 (Read by Me)

You can shed tears that he is gone,
Or you can smile because he lived,
You can close your eyes and pray that he will come back,
Or you can open your eyes and see all that he has left.
Your heart can be empty because you can't see him
Or you can be full of the love that you shared,
You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday,
Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.
You can remember him and only that he is gone
Or you can cherish his memory and let it live on,
You can cry and close your mind be empty and turn your back,
Or you can do what he would want: smile, open your eyes, love and go on.

Poem #2 (Read by James)

"I'll lend you for a little time
A child of Mine." He said.
"For you to love the while he lives
And mourn for when he's dead.
It may be six or seven years
Or twenty-two or three
But will you, till I call him back
Take care of him for Me?
He'll bring his charms to gladden you
And should his stay be brief,
You'll have his lovely memories
As solace for your grief.
I cannot promise he will stay

Since all from Earth return,
But there are lessons taught down there
I want the child to learn.
I've looked this wide world over
In my search for teacher's true,
And from the throngs that crowd life's lanes,
I have selected you;
Now will you give him all your love,
Nor think the labour vain
Nor hate Me when I come to call
And take him back again?
I fancied that I heard them say,
"Dear Lord, They will be done,
For all the joy Thy child shall bring,
For the risk of grief we'll run.
We'll shelter him with tenderness,
We'll love him while we may,
And for the happiness we've known,
Forever grateful stay.
But should the angels call for him
Much sooner than we planned,
We'll brave the bitter grief that comes
And try to understand."

Speech and Poem (Written and Read by Male Rent)

I have thought about this day many times over the past 18 months and although dreading that it would happen I have been determined to stand up here and say something about the wonderful son, brother and friend that we have lost. Being a parent is one of the hardest things in the world. It is also the most rewarding and demanding but the last thing you would ever imagine is that any of your children are going to die before you do. Nothing can prepare you for this.

Funeral orations are about celebrating the life of the departed. Graeme has had a short life but it has been packed with fun and adventure and he has touched the hearts and minds of everyone that he has met. This is clearly shown by the number of people that have come here today to say goodbye to him and to pay their respects. Anne and I are so proud of Graeme in all that he has achieved and in the way that he turned out. We know he was special and I am sure that you do too.

I am reminded of the story of the ancient Greek Achilles whose mother was asked when he was born if she wanted her son to have a long inconspicuous life or a short memorable one. She chose

the latter and he was famous in his time and his name lives on today. We had no choice in what sort of life Graeme would have and we would certainly not have chosen only the 28 years that we have had him. Graeme may not be universally famous but in those 28 years he has shown all the qualities that any parent would wish their son to have.

He achieved his wish of fame before the age of 30 by being the subject of an article in yesterday's Evening Gazette. I am sure he would have appreciated the article and it is a fitting tribute to a wonderful young man.

I want to finish with something that I wrote the night before he died:

Graeme is it Strength or Love?

We do not want to see you go

But don't like to see you suffer

We feel helpless yet what can we do?

But show our love for you

You have shown optimism in the darkest days

And strength in the face of despair

So we show our love for you

By watching over you as you sleep

Hoping you aren't in pain,

Thinking of things that you won't share

Like your own newborn son in your arms,

You would have been a lovely Dad

With that gentle smile and tenderness.

It is said fatherhood makes you less selfish

But you never had a selfish bone in your body

You've been there for friends when needed

And touched the lives of everyone you've met

You have inspired us all and never despaired.

What is it that has kept you so positive?

We all need some to keep us going.

You're a very special son, brother and friend

And we have nothing special to see us through

Only our love for you

It is not our strength that keeps us going

It is only our love for you

Address (Rev Meg Gilley)

How I wish we didn't have to be here today! But together we have an important task: to honour Graeme, who brought so much delight into our lives, to give thanks for his life, and to commend him to God.

Anne and Keith had a code. When her pregnancy was confirmed, Anne was to phone Keith to say that the eagle had landed. The eagle turned out to be Graeme, and he sure flew to the heights in the hearts and affections of those who knew him.

When Rachel was born three years later, Graeme was crazy about his little sister. He took a brush into hospital to brush her hair. He was very protective of her. And Rachael followed him round like a puppy dog. It was a happy childhood. Grandma Nora remembers the birthday parties in the back garden.

Grandad Jim introduced Graeme to football from a very young age. Mind you, there was a clash in the family. Grandad Jim was a Newcastle supporter and Grandad Ivor supported the Boro. But it was the Newcastle shirt that Graeme got first, and that meant a life-long commitment.

Graeme wasn't one for keeping you informed about what he was doing or giving you news about his friends. He told you the bare minimum unless you asked him a direct question. Even at Infant School. He came back from school saying he had been doing "pig work" and wouldn't give any more details. It only made sense when it got to parents' evening and Anne and Keith saw his work book with piggy banks stamped in it for counting the coins in the middle.

After Elm Tree Infant School, Graeme went to St Mark's Junior School and then to Grangefield and the VIth Form College. When it came to school work, and university for that matter, Graeme worked out what the pass mark was and did just enough to get through. He went to Newcastle University, not so much to study Economics and Geography, but to watch Newcastle United.

There was no getting away from it. His main passion was sport. He was not always the best at what he did, but he was the most determined. He played for the school 5-a-side team, and got a yellow card every week. He was a hard player, taking after Grandad Jim whose motto was "thou shalt not pass". He would have a go at any sport. At school, he entered everything on Sports Day, even things he wasn't particularly good at. When he was at VI Form College, he helped the football team at his old junior school, St Marks. He loved watching every kind of sport as well and had a phenomenal memory about who did what and when.

His other passion was cinema. He loved films of all sorts, and again, knew so much. His range was so wide, that he would go with different friends to see different genres. And you couldn't argue with him about films or sport - he would always be right. Above all, it was the Star Wars films that he loved. He had 50 Star Wars books.

From 16 years old, Graeme had a little job at Wickes, and continued to work part time at Sunderland Wickes while he was at university. In 2001, Graeme went to Canada for 6 months working as a teaching assistant for kids with learning disabilities as a result of foetal alcohol syndrome. The kids loved him. One little boy, who didn't have a dad of his own, sent him a Father's Day card. He taught the girls to play indoor soccer and they won a regional tournament. Graeme made some good friends in Canada.

Back in Stockton, Graeme worked at Wickes again. In August 2003, he got a job in the Civil Service. He started at Billingham Job Centre and soon transferred to the Hartlepool Action Team. He loved the work and enjoyed helping people.

When he got back from Canada, Graeme rejoined Stockton Hockey Club and loved to encourage the younger members. He believed strongly that you had to foster the game in younger people. And they are going to institute a trophy in Graeme's name, a trophy not for the best young player, but for the one who shows enthusiasm and determination, very much in Graeme's spirit.

In June 2004, Graeme climbed Mount Kilimanjaro. It was his first real trek. He loved it. After that, he wanted to do the mountain leadership course and climb Everest. He had lots of dreams. In August 2004, he did the Lyke Wake Walk, 42 miles in 24 hours.

Graeme was so laid back, almost horizontal. It took a lot to get him angry. He was very independent. Mind you, he had a stubborn streak. And he was very competitive.

In January 2005, Graeme was diagnosed with brain tumour, and he started on the gruelling path of surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy. His illness was an inconvenience to him, but there was no self-pity. Once he said that God had sent it for a reason, but he didn't really talk about it. He tried to protect everyone else from sadness - if you asked him how he was, he was fine. He didn't want to bother anyone, so he wouldn't say what he needed. Always he was thinking about the future. He kept his sense of humour throughout - you will remember the one-liners and the text messages.

When treatment was going well, he went back to work for 7 months, which is unheard of among people with his condition. This summer, many of you came to his birthday party. There was a tepee in the back garden and everyone dressed as cowboys and Indians, and Graeme sitting like an Indian chief holding court.

And always there were his friends. He had such a lot of friends. He liked people. There was Oded, a friend he made in Canada, who came from Israel to see him for 2 days just a few weeks ago. And friends he made on Kilimanjaro. And the friends from school and university and work and hockey. And the next generation. He was proud to be a supporting adult for Pippa.

The Bible reading we had just now was a prophecy about a time when God will bring his people together to an everlasting banquet held on his holy mountain, a community where there will be no death, no tears, where God will live with his people, and they will know the deepest happiness. Everything we do in life has a spiritual significance, though usually we are not conscious of it. You can see this in relation to Kilimanjaro. Graeme had come to love the mountains - there was that sense of extending yourself beyond all other experiences. All mountains have a sense of holiness, of being separate and above everything, places where you experience transcendence, the sense of otherness. And on the mountain you are reaching out to that dream of the holy mountain, the place where human and divine are united in communion. And the Christian vision of life after death is something like that, a state in which we know the deepest happiness because we are with God, and the pain and sorrow and death that are inevitable in our life on earth are no more. And that is what we pray for Graeme, that the love and delight he brought on earth will be completed and fulfilled in the life beyond.

It is hard for us to say goodbye. But that is what we must do today. Graeme has meant so much to so many people. He leaves a family and so many friends who loved him and will cherish their memories of him. So let us pray for him and for the family, and then we will hand him over to God.